

## General Introduction

The second volume of the *Anthology of Philosophy in Persia* deals with some major schools of thought in the early history of Islamic Persia that were not treated in the first volume. In the first volume, in addition to pre-Islamic thought in Persia, special attention was paid to the Peripatetic school associated most of all with the name of Ibn Sinā (Avicenna). This much better known school of Islamic philosophy is usually identified in the West as Islamic philosophy. In most general treatments of the history of Islamic philosophy, little attention has been paid until recently to other schools of thought of that period which are of philosophical significance. In the early centuries of Islamic history, Ismaili philosophy and philosophers influenced by Pythagorean and Hermetic ideas—also usually associated with Shi‘i thought in general and Ismailism in particular—stand out especially as schools of great philosophical significance if philosophy be understood in its traditional and time-honoured sense.

Ismailism, which is a branch of Shi‘ism that shares the first six Imams with the mainstream form of Shi‘ism known as the Ithnā ‘ashariyyah or Twelve-Imam Shi‘ism, began to formulate its philosophical and theological teachings earlier than any other form of Shi‘ism with which it has always shared a common concern for the central role of ‘*aql*, or intellect, in the understanding of religious doctrines. Already one can see the propensity toward intellectual discourse, the significance of ‘*aql*, and the usage of demonstration or *burhān* in the *Nahj al-balāghah* (Path of Eloquence), which is a collection of the sayings and teachings of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, the first Shi‘i Imam, collected in its present form by Sayyid Sharīf al-Raḍī. The Shi‘i Imams also held occasional discourse with those knowledgeable in Graeco-Alexandrian philosophies and sciences, as can be seen in the meeting between the eighth Imam of the Twelve-Imam School, ‘Alī al-Riḍā, and ‘Imrān al-Ṣābī, who belonged to the ‘Sabaean’ community of Ḥarrān, known to have been a centre where more esoteric currents of Graeco-Alexandrian thought were cultivated and preserved into the Islamic period. Moreover, the sixth Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq—the last person

to be accepted by both Twelve-Imam Shi'is and Ismailis as Imam—was associated with currents of Hermeticism, and Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, the first Muslim alchemist who is a historical figure despite having gained a 'mythological' dimension, was a student of Imam Ja'far. These and many other characteristics of Shi'ism and events in Shi'i sacred history created a more favourable ambience for the propagation of the intellectual sciences of which philosophy is the heart in Shi'i circles compared with most (but not all) climates dominated by later Sunni theological thought. The survival of Islamic philosophy during later centuries in Persia and its reflowering during the Safavid period, when Persia had become predominantly Shi'i of the Twelve-Imam School, is related to this reality as is the central significance of philosophy for the religious thought of Ismailism in general.

There is another cardinal point that must be remembered, and that is the esoteric dimension of Shi'ism that therefore links it at its very roots with Islamic esotericism as such, of which it is a manifestation along with Sufism, which is the central expression of that esoterism. Moreover, Islamic esotericism is based essentially on knowledge of a principal order (*al-ma'rifah/irfān*) and is therefore more than anything else Gnostic, if this term be understood in its original sense and not confused with the sectarian views of historical Gnosticism. From the beginning Shi'ism was concerned with gnosis, and throughout history one can observe the manifestation of Shi'i gnosis in various forms, with many of which we shall deal in later volumes of this series, especially those associated with Twelve-Imam Shi'ism. Meanwhile, in early Islamic history Ismaili gnosis began to manifest itself through a number of works that are both Gnostic and philosophical, or one could say theosophical in nature, if this latter term be understood in its authentic sense as *theosophia* or *al-ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah* in Arabic and *ḥikmat-i ilāhī* in Persian, terms which are its exact and literal equivalent.

Ismaili thought associated philosophy/theosophy with the esoteric dimension of the religion and the instructions of the Imams, who according to both Twelve-Imam and Ismaili Shi'ism possess knowledge of the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) truths of religion. During Islamic history many Muslims in fact referred to the Ismailis as *bāṭinīs*, sometimes in a pejorative sense accusing them of denying the outward (*ẓāhir*) form of the revelation. Without entering into this theological discussion which has had a long history, it suffices here to emphasize that for the Ismailis philosophy possesses essentially an esoteric, gnostic, and soteriological character and is not simply meant to be mental learning. It is related to the *ḥaqīqah* or truth at the heart of the Qur'ānic revelation, and therefore can be attained only after proper training of not solely the mind but also the whole of one's being, which then makes one worthy of receiving knowledge from the representative of true gnosis, who is none other than the Imam or his representatives. The role of the Imam and the hierarchy of those who know at whose head he stands is, therefore, essential in the disciple's gaining of authentic knowledge.

Understanding the true nature of this esoteric knowledge is related to grades of initiation and the attainment of spiritual virtues. The *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Treatises of the Brethren of Purity), composed in the fourth/tenth century, which the Ismailis have claimed over the centuries as their own (but which it might be said reflects the wider climate of Shi'ism in general), a work that had much influence in the Islamic world at large, is based more than anything else on the link between philosophy and the virtuous life. The Ismailis emphasized from the beginning the fact that a philosopher or *ḥakīm* had to be a sage in the traditional sense of the term, in whom perfection of knowledge and being were wed. They thereby propagated a view that the whole of Islamic tradition was also to embrace as the major intellectual schools of that tradition were crystallized. Such later masters of Islamic thought in Persia as Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, though not Ismaili, never ceased to emphasize the inalienable link between knowing and being and the moral and spiritual qualifications necessary for the understanding of philosophy. The Ismailis and later schools of thought also often made a distinction between *falsafah* as the fruit of ratiocination and *ḥikmah* as true philosophy, adding that the first was attainable through the training of the mind and the second only through the training of one's whole being. This distinction was not, however, absolute and there are a number of authors who use *falsafah* and *ḥikmah* practically interchangeably and as closely associated terms, enumerating the same conditions for the mastering of *falsafah* as they do for *ḥikmah*.

In any case, Ismaili philosophy with its Gnostic nature was able to integrate readily into its perspective other schools of thought of a Gnostic and esoteric character with which it came into contact. These included not only the esoteric strands of Graeco-Alexandrian thought such as Hermeticism and Neopythagoreanism, but also certain cosmological ideas associated with Mazdaism and Manichaeism. Nor were the Ismaili philosophers indifferent to Neoplatonism. On the contrary, they showed great interest in this last major metaphysical synthesis of the Greek tradition, but they did not display the same degree of interest in Aristotelianism as did the Muslim Peripatetics. It is true that both the Peripatetics and the Ismaili philosophies integrated elements of Graeco-Alexandrian thought into their perspectives drawn essentially from the Islamic worldview and created philosophies which for this very reason were Islamic. But precisely because of the difference in emphasis and the type of Graeco-Alexandrian thought that they integrated into different dimensions of the Islamic intellectual universe, they created different and distinct schools of philosophy which interacted with each other in many ways and which must be considered fully in any serious study of philosophy in Persia. This claim holds true especially since nearly all the major early Ismaili philosophers, although associated with the Fatimids and their capital in Cairo, were Persians.

The selections of Ismaili philosophy presented in this volume cover some five centuries, from the second/eighth to the seventh/thirteenth, starting with the

enigmatic *Umm al-kitāb* (The Archetypal Book), the earliest Ismaili philosophical text written in archaic Persian, to the writings of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who was devoted to the study of Ismailism while in the service of the Ismaili rulers of Alamūt, but who emerged as a Twelve-Imam Shi'i who wrote the first systematic work of theology in this branch of Shi'ism, entitled *Kitāb al-tajrīd* (The Book of Catharsis). The period considered in the present volume was marked by the ascendancy of the Fatimids. Later on the period was punctuated by the 'Resurrection of Alamūt', announced in 559/1164 by the Ismaili Imam of the time, and associated with the name of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the establishment of Ismaili states in the mountainous regions of northeastern Persia, especially Quhistān in Khurāsān. This period came abruptly to an end with the Mongol invasion of western Asia by Hūlagu. Henceforth in Persia Ismailism took another form, going for the most part underground and becoming intermingled with certain forms of Sufism. In effect, the 'golden age' of Ismaili philosophy is the very period treated in this volume, which from the point of view of philosophy came to an end with Ṭūsī, although Ismaili thought continued to produce works of mystical and theological significance and even some of a philosophical nature, especially in Yemen and India.

Of special interest regarding philosophy in Persia is the fact that this early period of Ismaili philosophy, which also marks in many ways its peak, involved the cultivation of the Persian language as a medium for philosophical discourse. This tendency can be seen from the *Umm al-kitāb* onward and culminates, from the point of view of the beauty and maturity of language, in the works of Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Usually, Ibn Sīnā is credited with writing the first philosophical work in Persian, the *Dānish-nāmah-yi 'alā'ī* (The Book of Science Dedicated to 'Alā' al-Dawlah). This statement is certainly true for Peripatetic philosophy, but if we look at philosophy in general, including other schools of thought, then the major contribution of Ismaili writers to the very foundation of philosophical Persian must be given serious consideration. Moreover, perhaps the only figure in the history of Persia who was at once a major poet and a major philosopher is the Ismaili Nāṣir-i Khusraw, 'Umar Khayyām being the only other possible candidate for such an honour. There were of course other Persian philosophers who were also poets, such as Afḍal al-Dīn Kāshānī, Mīr Dāmād, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Sabziwārī, but none held the same position of eminence in poetry as did Nāṣir-i Khusraw, who is considered by most authorities to be one of the seven greatest poets in the Persian language. At the same time he was a major philosopher who wrote all his works in Persian.

The Ismaili philosophers under consideration in this volume did not simply repeat the same philosophical ideas. While they were all concerned with the soteriological function of knowledge, the esoteric character of philosophy, the relation between religion and philosophy, the development of an esoteric cosmology and anthropology, the study of the philosophical significance of the presence of the Imam as the source of infallible knowledge, and many other issues, one can see as

well a gradual unfolding over the centuries of ideas concerning other matters. For example, the development of a metaphysics based upon not Being but the Beyond-Being, of which Being is the First Act, and the incorporation of the Neoplatonic idea of emanation into the Ismaili worldview took place gradually.

The centuries under consideration here also reveal extensive interaction between Ismaili philosophy on the one hand and various schools of Islamic philosophy and theology as a whole on the other. This fact can be seen in Abū Ḥātim Rāzī's criticism of Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' Rāzī, the interaction between Ibn Sīnā's synthesis and systematization of Peripatetic philosophy and the writings of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī, and the response of Sunni thinkers to the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', read extensively by many of these thinkers including such a major Sunni figure as Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, who at the same time wrote against Ismailism. In any case, the tradition of Ismaili philosophy, developed mostly in Persia during the earlier centuries of Islamic history, is of much philosophical interest and is certainly one of the important schools of philosophy that developed during the Islamic period. Its treatment of such subjects as the relation of time and eternity; cosmic cycles; the nature of the *anthropos*; a metaphysics based not on Being but the Absolute as Beyond-Being whose first manifestation is Being; a cosmology related to the hierarchy of spiritual beings; the relation between religion in its formal aspect and philosophy, reason, and revelation; and many other intellectual themes are of innate philosophical value as well as being of great significance for the in-depth understanding of Islamic philosophy in general.

The selections chosen for this volume begin with the *Umm al-kitāb* (The Archetypal Book), meaning literally 'Mother of all Books', which is one of the names of the Qur'ān itself. The work purported to be the result of certain questions posed to the fifth Shi'i Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, contains many themes of philosophical interest that were to be expanded in many later works of Ismaili philosophy. There is an explanation of the letters of the Divine Name 'Allah' interpreted according to Shi'i esoterism. This concern with the symbolism of letters, which is also found in the Kabbala, is in evidence among numerous Shi'i as well as Sufi authors and is said to go back to the science of the esoteric meaning of letters and their numerical values or *jafr* associated with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb and taught by him to those who were inheritors of his esoteric knowledge.

The *Umm al-kitāb* also discusses the relationship between the Prophet and 'Alī, the legislating aspect of revelation and its esoteric aspect, and delves into the technical Ismaili terminology of the silent (*ṣāmit*) and the enunciator (*nāṭiq*). This whole section points to the sharp delineation made by Ismaili thought between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of religion and the association of philosophy as *ḥikmah* with the esoteric dimension. It is in light of this esoteric view of philosophy that the text deals with the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm,

astrological symbolism, and the explanation of sacred history based on the number 7, which is central to the Ismaili perspective to the extent that they have sometimes been referred to as the Seveners. These ideas reveal the early integration of certain elements of Hermeticism, Pythagoreanism, and other strands of esoteric ideas in the Graeco-Alexandrian world into the perspective of early Shi'ism in general and Ismailism in particular.

The selections from the *Umm al-kitāb* include also a section dealing with the esoteric significance of events and realities of Islamic sacred history, specifically the seven prophets and major spiritual figures of this cycle—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, the Prophet of Islam, and 'Alī—and what has been the most important event or object associated with them, namely, in consecutive order, the *bayt al-ma'mūr* (the heavenly prototype of the temple of Mecca), the Ark, the bird (mentioned in the Qur'ān in association with Abraham), Mount Sinai, the birth of Jesus, and the Dhu'l-fiḡār (the two-pronged sword of 'Alī). All of these realities of Islamic sacred history are treated from the point of view of their esoteric meaning. The *Umm al-kitāb* also analyses chapters of the Qur'ān according to early Ismaili cosmology, identifying various chapters with stages in the cycle of prophecy. The same symbolic approach is used in the study of the tenets of the Shari'ah. It is of particular interest to note how the five daily prayers are shown to be correlated with both the external senses of man and his inner constitution. This type of study was to be pursued by many later Sufis and philosophers, and we find extensive studies in works concerned with 'secrets of worship' (*asrār al-'ibādāt*) in later centuries by such figures as Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī and Ḥājī Mullā Ḥādī Sabziwārī, both of whom will be treated in the last volume of this anthology.

There is a body of writings in Arabic attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān al-Tūsī al-Ṣūfī, which has caused a great deal of debate among scholars in both East and West. Some Western scholars have gone so far as to deny that there ever was such a figure as Jābir, while most Muslim scholars accept the traditional account that such a figure actually did exist and that he was a disciple of the sixth Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Most likely the latter view is correct and many of the treatises attributed to him are by him, while many other titles within the vast *Jābirean Corpus* were written by later authors of mostly Ismaili background inspired by him. In any case, the body of works associated with Jābir, who hailed from Khurāsān, forms an important chapter in Islamic intellectual history in general and that of Persia in particular.

Jābir is the founder of Islamic alchemy and its most famous practitioner, while he also exercised vast influence in the West where he was known as Geber and where, because of his authority, some Latin works were written and attributed to him. The *Jābirean Corpus* deals naturally to a great extent with Hermetic philosophy. But it also deals with many other subjects, including the philosophy of science in general and the philosophy of language. The vastly diverse domains that form the subject

matter of the *Corpus* are united by the central concept of the balance (*al-mīzān*), which Jābir applies in both a quantitative and a qualitative manner to nearly every realm of existence and its study ranging from alchemy to the science of the soul, which constitutes its inner dimension, to the study of language. He also establishes correspondences between these and other realms in the manner that one finds in Hermetic philosophy in both East and West.

The selection from the writings of Jābir consists of the *Kitāb al-aḥjār* (The Book of Stones), where he seeks to clarify the views of Balinās (Apollonius of Tyana) on the balance, complementing his own studies on the subject in the series of works he wrote under the title *Books of Balances*. The text reveals Jābir's mastery of the sciences of language (concerning Arabic) as well as alchemy and his acceptance of the traditional idea, later expounded by other Persian thinkers, that the name of a thing is related to that thing's nature and reality. For most authors this view involves the sacred language of Arabic and not just any language, and within the Islamic world this view is ultimately based on the Qur'ānic verse that God taught Adam the names of all things by virtue of which he and his progeny were able to gain knowledge of them. In this perspective the name of a thing is not simply a man-made word having nothing to do with the nature of that thing. Rather, each letter of that name corresponds to a nature or quality and also to numerical symbols. Through the balance, these numbers and qualities determine the outward and inward nature of a thing, as the term *nature* is understood in ordinary language and not in its alchemical connotation.

Hermeticism and the alchemical philosophy of nature, the philosophy of language in its relation to the study of the natural world, the idea of correspondences between various orders of reality, and many other ideas to be found in the *Jābirean Corpus* are all of great significance for the history of science as well as philosophy. One cannot in fact understand the depth and breadth of philosophy in Persia and the many different issues with which it was concerned without at least some sampling of the vast *Jābirean Corpus* whose origin and many of whose works certainly go back to the historical figure of Jābir, at once a Sufi, a man from the famous Khurāsānī city of Tūs, and a disciple of the sixth Shi'i Imam after whom the Twelve-Imam Shi'i Law (the Ja'fari) that has dominated Persia since the tenth/sixteenth century is named.

With Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī we reach perhaps the earliest systematic expositor of Ismaili philosophy. The Persian text of his *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Unveiling of the Hidden) included in this volume is based on an earlier fourth/tenth century text in Arabic that has been lost, but the survival of this early Persian translation attests to the role played by Persian in the whole tradition of Ismaili philosophy. The work is composed of seven treatises on divine knowledge, making use of the central sacred number of Ismailism. In the first discourse, Sijistānī deals with Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) in the language of the radical apophatic theology that characterizes this

phase of Ismaili thought. He also deals with the angelic ranks and degrees of creation so central to Ismaili cosmogony and cosmology. Sijistānī emphasizes also the seven cycles of prophecy, each cycle beginning with a prophet and ending with an imam, who becomes enunciator (*nāṭiq*) of the next cycle.

In the selections from Sijistānī's other major work, *Kitāb al-yanābī'* (The Book of Wellsprings) the discussion of *tawḥīd* continues, but most of the material is devoted to the intellect ('*aql*)—its rapport with the Divine Origin (*Mubdi'*) on the one hand and with the soul (*nafs*) and the natural world on the other. A definition is given of the intellect and its primacy emphasized. The knowledge acquired by '*aql*' is discussed in relation to divine assistance (*ta'yīd*) and as inspired by divine guidance (*mu'ayyid*). These are specifically Ismaili terms that help to define the Ismaili understanding of '*aql*', which plays such a pivotal role in Ismaili philosophy as well as theology.

Many Ismaili philosophers were knowledgeable in the doctrines of other religions and showed keen interest in comprehending their meaning, which according to their perspective they usually sought on the esoteric level. The section on Sijistānī terminates with a text that belongs to the field now often called comparative religion. Therein Sijistānī discusses the symbolism of the cross and why it is venerated by Christians. He also explains why its veneration for them is like the veneration of the *shahādah* for Muslims. Here again early Shi'i thought in general, and Ismailism in particular, displays interest in issues later treated in Sufism, often in similar or parallel fashion. The Sufi doctrine of the symbolism of the cross has become well known in the West thanks to the classical work of René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, which deals in a much more extensive and thorough manner with a subject for which concern is nevertheless present in this early work of Sijistānī written a millennium earlier.

Abū Ḥātim Rāzī's *A'lām al-nubuwwah* (Science of Prophecy) is not only a major text of Ismaili thought but also an important text of Islamic philosophy concerned with what is today called the philosophy of religion. Like Sijistānī, Rāzī was deeply interested in the universal reality of religion and revelation within as well as across the religious frontiers of Islam, and he dealt with many issues that lie at the heart of the current discussion in the West on religious diversity, or what many now call religious pluralism. This seminal work also deals, however, with another subject of great importance to Islamic thinkers—namely, the origin of the sciences. Rāzī considers the sciences including astronomy and pharmacology, especially knowledge of the medical properties of herbs, to have been originally revealed knowledge. Rāzī writes that in teaching Adam the names of all things, as asserted in the Qur'ān, God also taught him the medicinal properties of plants. Rāzī in fact presents a kind of sacred history of science that was shared by many other Muslim thinkers and is also found in traditions such as Hinduism, as well as among certain Christian and Jewish authors. His views are, needless to say,



of much importance for the Islamic understanding of the sciences of nature themselves.

With Ḥamid al-Dīn Kirmānī, we reach the most systematic treatment of early Ismaili philosophy. Kirmānī, whose systematic treatment of that philosophy caused him to be called by some later authorities the Ismaili Ibn Sīnā, wrote a number of works, among which *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* (Repose of the Intellect) stands out as the best known and most influential. In pages chosen for this anthology from this work, arguments for the existence of God, the nature of the intellect, the system of emanation reaching down to the world of nature, and other major philosophical issues developed in Ismaili philosophy are treated in a logical and systematic fashion that bears comparison with the Peripatetic theses of masters such as Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. In a comparison and contrasting of Ismaili and *mashshāʿī* philosophies, the *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* serves as a particularly valuable text that reveals the richness and diversity of philosophical thought in Persia in the early Islamic period.

The selections from the works of Kirmānī include also his treatise *al-Risālat al-durriyyah* rendered by its translator as *The Brilliant Treatise* while it literally means *The Pearly Treatise*. In this concise work, Kirmānī deals with the question of unity and the different meanings that technical Arabic terms such as *wāḥid*, *aḥad*, *fard* as well as *muwaḥḥid* and *muwaḥḥad* have in the context of Ismaili philosophy and theology. It is well known that Ismaili thought considers the Divine Reality, the Originator (*al-Mubdiʿ*), to stand even above Being. Kirmānī follows the same doctrine in this treatise in considering God as the Originator to stand even above *tawḥīd*, since He is the Originator of both *wāḥid* and *aḥad*, Names of God associated with unity. Kirmānī also deals briefly with numerical symbolism in relation to his discussion of the relation between the unifier and the unified and the manifestation of unity in the domain of contingency. This treatise represents a summary of Kirmānī's views on the central subject of Islamic thought and was written in his later life after his major philosophical masterpiece *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* to which he refers in this text.

The *Rasāʾil* (Epistles or Treatises) of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, the enigmatic Brethren of Purity who lived in Iraq in the fourth/tenth century in the Shiʿi milieu of Baṣra and perhaps Baghdad, are not the product of a single figure, Arab or Persian, but a group nurtured in a climate dominated by both Arab and Persian elements. Even their Ismaili affiliation has been doubted by some scholars in favour of a more general Shiʿi character. They were, however, claimed later specifically by the Ismailis; the treatise entitled *Risālat al-jāmiʿah* (The Treatise of Summation), which summarizes the teachings of the *Rasāʾil*, and the even more esoteric *Jāmiʿat al-jāmiʿah* (The Summation of the Summation) especially are not only Ismaili texts but are also used as esoteric works taught only to those who have reached the higher levels in the hierarchy of Ismaili initiation. They were not even available to the general public until fairly recently. The *Rasāʾil*, therefore, belong to any general treatment

of Ismaili philosophy as it developed in Persia, although their influence went far beyond the Ismaili, or even the general Shi'i world, and there were few major Shi'i or Sunni figures of later Islamic thought, concerned with the esoteric dimension of Islam, who were not familiar with it, including such colossal figures as Ghazzālī, Ibn 'Arabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā.

What is of particular interest in the *Rasā'il* is not only their assertion of the esoteric nature of true philosophy, grades of initiation, degrees of knowledge and the wedding between philosophy and spiritual realization combined with moral rectitude – so characteristic of Ismaili philosophy in general – but their clear exposition of Islamic Pythagoreanism and Hermeticism. No single treatise in Islamic philosophy is in fact more impregnated with Pythagorean ideas integrated into the Islamic perspective as are the *Rasā'il*. This is to be seen especially in the treatise on arithmetic, which is without doubt one of the major sources for understanding the Islamic philosophy of mathematics, but also in the treatises on music, geometry, astronomy—in fact, practically throughout the fifty-one treatises that constitute the *Rasā'il*. Herein is to be found an exposition in depth of the *quadrivium* and the *trivium* as these disciplines were understood in the medieval West and going back to Greek philosophy and the *artes liberales* of Cicero.

The selections chosen from the *Rasā'il* deal not only with this Pythagorean philosophy but also with the Hermetic idea of the relation between the microcosm and macrocosm, which Muslims trace back to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Extensive correspondences are described by the Ikhwān between the structure of the human state and the structures of the heavens and the earth; detailed resemblances are shown between man and the three kingdoms of minerals, plants, and animals, which are synthesized in man's being.

The selections from the *Rasā'il* conclude with a section on the debate between man and the animals, who argue about their respective rights before the king of the *jinn*. This writing by the Ikhwān is one of the most pertinent in the annals of Islamic philosophy as far as the current environmental crisis is concerned. At a time when man is usurping the rights of other creatures and destroying the natural environment on the assumption of his absolute rights over creation, the philosophical arguments provided by the Ikhwān concerning the rights of animals are of incredible timeliness and display an 'ecological philosophy' that is of the greatest significance for the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of the environment and a response to the current environmental crisis.

Of all the Ismaili figures presented in this volume, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Shīrāzī is in a sense the least philosophical. Yet, as one of the greatest figures of Fatimid Ismailism, his expositions of the tenets of Ismaili teachings are both authoritative and revealing as far as the philosophical dimensions of Ismaili theological doctrines are concerned. Shīrāzī deals, in the selections from his *Jāmi'at al-ḥaqā'iq* (The Sum of Truths), first of all with *ta'wīl*, which means literally taking something back to its

source, based on the metaphysical principle that all that is manifested or revealed has an inward (*bāṭin*) and an outward (*ẓāhir*) aspect and issues from the inward to the outward. *Ta'wīl* is therefore a casting aside of the veil of outwardness or *kashf al-mahjūb*, a term used by both Sufis and Shi'is to denote not arbitrary rejection of the outward form, but of reaching the inward through the outward with the aid of a science, that comes from the dimension of inwardness associated with the Imam in Shi'ism. *Ta'wīl* can be said to be hermeneutic interpretation if the term hermeneutics is understood in its original sense as dealing with the inner mystery of things which was the function of Hermes to reveal or unveil according to Hermeticism.

With this understanding in mind, Shīrāzī, then, deals with the 'initiatric power' (*walāyah/wilāyah*) associated in the Islamic revelation with 'Alī and the necessity of the Imam, who is the inheritor of the power of *walāyah/wilāyah*, and the guide for those who aspire to carry out *ta'wīl* with respect to both revelation in the sense of sacred scripture and that primordial revelation which is the cosmos. As an example, Shīrāzī applies the method of *ta'wīl* to the understanding of the famous *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate', in which the 'gate' itself is identified as the science of *ta'wīl*. He also follows the teachings of the sixth Shi'i Imam, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, in providing a profound metaphysical interpretation of another well-known *ḥadīth*, 'he who knows himself knows his Lord', in which Shīrāzī has recourse to specifically Ismaili ideas and terms such as *ḥadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) or limit(s), which is associated by Ismailism with the hierarchy of being and which he calls 'the parents of the soul'. It needs hardly to be emphasized how significant these ideas are for the understanding of Ismaili philosophy and theosophy and also how fecund they are philosophically speaking even independent of the Ismaili matrix within which they were cultivated.

With Nāṣir-i Khusraw we reach in many ways the peak of Ismaili philosophy. Some Persian scholars have even gone so far as to consider him the most challenging of Persian philosophers. The selection presented in this volume deals most of all with the relation between religion and philosophy, or faith and reason, which has been of concern to all Islamic philosophers. Like other Ismaili philosophers, Nāṣir-i Khusraw identifies philosophy with the inner dimension of religion and seeks to harmonize what he calls the *ḥikmatayn* or two philosophies/wisdoms (that is, philosophy and wisdom derived from the intellect and from revelation), this harmonization being the basic theme of his most important work, the *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn* (The Sum of the Two Wisdoms). To this end he elaborates on the correspondences between man and the cosmos, cycles of prophecy, and the history and grades of Ismaili initiation. He speaks of the seven angelic lights and the seven prophets, and provides a philosophical explanation of such realities as angels, *parīs* (fairies), and devils—all of whom possess a specifically religious significance and play a major role in the religious cosmos. Through these explanations one gains

a glimpse of a rhapsodic Ismaili vision of reality dominated by the number 7, so central to Ismaili philosophy and theology and mentioned in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in relation to the structure of both the heavens and the earth.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw also delves deeply into the meaning and significance of the intellect (*'aql*) and its relation to knowledge. He accentuates the general Shi'i emphasis on the significance of the intellect, an emphasis central to an understanding of why—as already mentioned in general, although not necessarily always—Shi'i theology and jurisprudence were more favourable to the intellectual sciences, of which philosophy is the heart, than were the majority of Sunni theologians and jurists and why an antiphilosophical *kalām* such as that of the Ash'arites did not have its equivalence in Shi'i theology despite the deep interaction between Sunni and Shi'i theologies

The section on Nāṣir-i Khusraw includes a discussion of cosmology drawn from his *Gushāyish wa rahāyish* (literally 'Opening and Liberation' but also translated as 'Knowledge and Liberation'), which contains a most penetrating example of early Ismaili thought concerned with the complicated questions of the genesis of the world, its newness or eternity, and similar issues that have been of concern to philosophers and theologians in Persia over the ages. Being the great moralist and philosophical poet that he was, Nāṣir-i Khusraw could not be included in this volume without a sample of his poetry. A few philosophical poems are therefore presented to bring to an end the selection of his writings.

Selections from the Ismaili writings of Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī who was not only an expositor of Ismaili teachings, but also a leading Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) philosopher as well as the founder of Twelve-Imam Shi'i rational theology, brings this volume to a close. This section begins with a segment of Ṭūsī's *Sayr wa sulūk* (literally 'Journeying and Spiritual Wayfaring' but also translated as 'Contemplation and Action'), which has an autobiographical element within it although also dealing with philosophical issues. The title of the work, literally 'spiritual wayfaring', is associated especially with Sufism. But in it Ṭūsī deals more with his intellectual journey rather than with personal spiritual matters. Because he is one of the greatest intellectual figures in Persian history, at once supreme philosopher, theologian, and scientist, his own account of his intellectual journey is of great interest for the understanding of the tradition of Islamic philosophy in Persia in general.

In the *Sayr wa sulūk* Ṭūsī explains his early attraction, after studying *Uṣūl* or the principles of religion and the Sacred Law, to the intellectual sciences and his study of theology and philosophy. But in turning to the study of the supreme object of metaphysics, that is the Divine Reality, Ṭūsī gives an account of how he realized that ordinary philosophy was not enough and that there was the necessity of a 'truthful instructor' and 'instruction' (*ta'līm*) from an infallible teacher who had received knowledge of God from God Himself. Herein lies the specifically Ismaili nature of this treatise for this idea of receiving instruction (*ta'līm*) from the infallible Imam

was so characteristic of the Ismailis that they came to be known in Islamic society at large also as 'those who receive instruction' (*ta'limiyyān*). In discussing the necessity of instruction in the particular sense given to it by Ismaili doctrines, Ṭūsī also discusses the nature of the Divine Intellect in its relation to the human intellect and the whole act of intellection.

As for selections of Ṭūsī drawn from his *Taṣawwūrāt* (Notions), they begin with the definition of the soul (*naḥs*) in its various levels of reality and distinct from the intellect. Ṭūsī emphasizes the supreme importance of knowledge (*'ilm*), which is the ultimate goal of the soul and whose realization marks the soul's perfection. He also discusses the levels of intelligence within human beings, going back to Ibn Sīnā's enumeration of the four stages of the intellect. Ṭūsī then turns to the human body and why the soul becomes attached to it. In the manner of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Ṭūsī compares the body to a city while he also considers the stages of the growth of the body from its inception in the womb until its birth, a process governed at each stage by one of the planets.

In a section of particular interest for understanding the continuities and discontinuities of the philosophical tradition of Persia, Ṭūsī discusses the nature of good and evil and points out that they are not ontologically equivalent. He explicitly rejects the usual understanding of Zoroastrian dualism in which Yazdān and Ahrīman, to use Ṭūsī's language, are opposite forces of good and evil that seem to possess the same ontological status. Throughout its long history, Persian thought has been concerned with the question of good and evil, but with the advent of Islam, which emphasizes unity above all else, the metaphysical background of the ethical discussion changed and even those such as Suhrawardī who supported the wisdom of the ancient Persian philosophers (*ḥukamā-yi furs*) asserted that these sages were unitarians and did not believe in dualism and the ontological equivalence of good and evil.

Ṭūsī then turns to *ta'wīl*, in the time-honoured sense of the term already discussed, to deal with the thorny issue of the newness or eternity of the world. He asserts that time is cyclic and in each cycle there is a new world that did not exist before. Therefore, *this* world is not eternal but new (*ḥadīth*). Yet, there is always *a* world but not *this* world that did not exist in the last cycle and will cease to exist in the next cycle. As there is always *a* world, there is also always *a* humanity but not the humanity of this cycle. In each world man must be present because he is the final purpose of the world. Ṭūsī also deals in greater detail with the seven smaller cycles of cosmic history, each cycle consisting of seven thousand years after which—that is, after forty-nine thousand years—the Great Resurrection takes place and the whole of present creation reaches the end of its cycle.

The subjects and themes treated by the major Ismaili philosophers of Persia in this volume constitute the heart of Ismaili philosophy as such and have been treasured by later Ismaili thinkers of not only Persia itself but also of the Yemen,

India, Syria, and other lands where much of the later Ismaili writings saw the light of day. But it must be remembered that this Ismaili philosophical tradition is not to be identified solely with the Ismaili branch of Shi'ism. Rather, it belongs to the integral tradition of Islamic philosophy as well as Shi'i thought in general. Like Sufism, Ismailism and Twelve-Imam Shi'ism drew their inspiration, knowledge—in fact their very existence—mostly from the esoteric dimension of the Islamic tradition and their philosophy bears the imprint of that source. That is why Ismailism shared certain ideas with Sufism and after the Mongol invasion it went underground in Persia to appear in many places as a form of Sufism. In this context it is noteworthy that one of the greatest masterpieces of Persian Sufi poetry, the *Gulshan-i rāz* (The Secret Garden of Divine Mysteries) of Maḥmūd Shabistari had not only later Sufi commentators but also Ismaili ones.

Ismaili philosophy also shares much with later Islamic philosophy as it developed in Persia in the Twelve-Imam Shi'i milieu created by the Safavids. It is true that it was most of all Mullā Ṣadrā who, in the eleventh/seventeenth century, drew the full implications of the philosophical saying of the Shi'i Imams, as one observes in his commentary upon Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfi* (The Sufficient Principles). But long before Mullā Ṣadrā, the early Ismaili philosophers drew to a large extent from the teachings of the Shi'i Imams whom, up to and including the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, they shared with the Twelve-Imam Shi'a. That is why they must be considered as being among the predecessors of Mullā Ṣadrā from the point of view of the exposition of the philosophical dimension of the esoteric teachings of the Imams. It should be added that Mullā Ṣadrā was in fact familiar with some of their writings. In any case, Ismaili philosophy is an important manifestation of philosophical thought in Persia related in profound ways to Sufism on the one hand and the later flowering of philosophy in the Shi'i Persia of the Safavid period on the other. The Ismaili philosophical tradition also created some of the most important philosophical works in the Persian language, and left an indelible mark upon the development of Persian as a vehicle for philosophical discourse, a vehicle that was to be used continuously by Persian philosophers through the centuries continuing in fact up to today.

Ismaili philosophy provides teachings of great depth about time and eternity, cosmic cycles, the nature of the *anthropōs*, a metaphysics based not on Being but the Absolute as Beyond-Being whose first manifestation is Being, a cosmology related to the hierarchy of spiritual beings, the relation between religion in its formal aspect and philosophy or reason and revelation and many other basic philosophical themes. It is certainly one of the major schools of Islamic philosophy associated in its early centuries nearly completely with Persia and also to a large extent with the Persian language. Although Ismailism went underground in Persia after the Mongol Invasion, its influence in later schools of philosophy, theology and even certain strands of Sufism is evident while the major philosophical

works written by such figures as Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Nāṣir-i Khusraw, not to mention the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' written by both Arabs and Persians, are among outstanding monuments of the long tradition of philosophy in Persia.

S. H. Nasr

*Umm al-kitāb*

*Umm al-kitāb* is a major work of the early Shi'i Imami tradition of Central Asia. It was originally written in Arabic in the second half of the second/eighth century by a Shi'i *ghulāt* sect called al-Mukhammisah (the Pentadists), and then rendered into an eccentric Persian style and preserved by the Nizārī Ismailis of Central Asia. Its origin is evident not only in the doctrinal and cosmological features of the treatise but also because of such nuances as its attribution of a major role in the rise of Islam to Salmān al-Fārisī, whose gnostic name here is al-Salsāl and who is regarded as a gate through whom one could gain access to Muḥammadan Light.

The treatise contains a discourse of the fifth Shi'i Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/732), who appears here as a five-year-old child, the situation strongly resembling certain apocryphal Gospels relating to Jesus. Imam al-Bāqir responds in this treatise to thirty questions raised by a group of disciples among whom Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī, Ja'far al-Ju'fi, Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb, Abu'l-Khālīd al-Kabīlī, and Muḥammad ibn al-Mufaḍḍal can be named.

*Umm al-kitāb* offers an esoteric hermeneutics (*ta'wīl*) of the nature of man and his place in the universe, as well as of questions concerning cosmology, epistemology, and Islamic worship within a Qur'ānic context. The analysis and interpretations offered in this treatise seem to be a synthesis of many different pre-Islamic religious traditions and schools of thought, such as Manichaeism, Buddhism and Valentinian Gnosticism, with Shi'i teachings.

The central idea in the work is the psychological and philosophical interpretation of cosmological symbols, and the faithful are asked to engage themselves in acts of inner purification and transformation. Throughout the work, the 'theology of light' pervades every doctrine. An extraordinary number of colours are displayed to symbolize different theurgies and the corresponding levels of consciousness that man must realize within himself.

This text, which remains part of the corpus of the Central Asian Ismaili literature to this day, is held in high esteem particularly by the Nizārī Ismaili communities



living in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and northern areas of Pakistan and more generally in the Pamir range. The selection deals primarily with the subject of man and the esoteric and philosophical significance of the Qur'ān and the symbolic significance of worship in Islam.

M. Aminrazavi

## THE MOTHER OF BOOKS

*Umm al-kitāb*

Translated for this volume by Latimah Parvin Peerwani from *Umm al-kitāb*, ed. W. Ivanow, in *Der Islam*, 23 (1936), pp. 1–32.

[4] This book is called the ‘Mother of Books’ (*Umm al-kitāb*), because it is the capital (*sarmāyah*) of all the books. Every kind of knowledge which exists in this world is extracted from this book. This book is called the ‘Mother of the Books’ (*Umm al-kitāb*), [5] that means whoever reads this book it is such that once and for all he becomes independent of every science. This book is called the ‘Spirit of the Books’ (*rūḥ al-kitāb*), for it is the spirit of all the books, and essence (*ma’nī*) of all the books. There is insight [about everything] in this book. It is called the ‘Light of the Books’ (*nūr al-kitāb*), because the [explication of] the light of the heavens and the earth is given in it. It is called the ‘All-embracing doctrines’ (*wāsi‘ al-maqālāt*), because it reveals the seven divine doctrines. [6] It is called the ‘Seven Disputes’ (*sab‘ al-mujādalāt*), because the seven disputes between Iblīs and Adam are given in it. It is called the ‘Exalter of Degrees’ (*rafi‘ al-darajāt*) [Qur’ān, 40:15], because the degree and the essence of the believers and the infidels and those spirits are known by this book. It is called the ‘Bearer of good tidings’ (*bashīr al-mubāsharāt*), because it is the herald of good tidings to the believers who attain liberation and salvation by [following] this book. It is called the ‘Ten Articles’ (*‘ashr al-maqālāt*), because the attribute of ten cosmic palaces and the mode of ten spirits is known through this book. It is called the ‘Seven Manifestations’ (*sab‘ al-ẓuhūrāt*), because the attribute of seven physical and spiritual cycles in its real sense is given in this book. It is called the ‘Book of Reward’ (*Kitāb al-mujāzāt*), because the reward and punishment for the believers and infidels of the microcosm and macrocosm are described in it. It is called the ‘Book of Mothers’ (*Kitāb al-ummahāt*), because it is the root and essence of Tawrāt, Injīl, Zabūr, Furqān [Qur’ān], and [the essence of] every scripture which exists in the world [8] is given in this book.

This book was composed in the city of Mecca in the locality of Quraysh b. Hāshim, in the house of ‘Abd al-Manāf, and was found in the treasury of Bāqir al-Salām. Ja‘far [al-] Ju‘fī<sup>1</sup> brought it to Kūfa. In the time of Hārūn [al-Rashīd], ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīm brought it to Iraq. After his death it was handed over to the believers and [his] apostles as a trust to be safeguarded from the undeserving. The believers, the unitarians (*muwahḥidān*) and [9] the chiefs have not exposed

1. Jābir (or) Ja‘far al-Ju‘fī, (d.128/746), known as one of the noteworthy *ghulāt* in the circle of the sixth Shi‘i Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq. Cf. W. Madelung, ‘Djābir al-Dju‘fī’, *El2*, Supplement, pp. 232–233.

it to any dissident person, nor have they spoken about it to any creature. That is because not every believer can comprehend this knowledge, for this is that category of knowledge which transcends our comprehension and imagination and we are not receptive to it except he who is a unified believer, or a dispatched prophet or a cherub. That is why their hearts are full of the light of divine unity. [Apart from them] no other believer has any capacity to stomach this knowledge of the realm of Mysteries. [If he endeavours in it] he only wastes his life and thereby suffers the loss of life. [10]

The attribute of the unity of the Creator, glorified be His majesty, is known through this book. Also, the realities of God's creation from behind the highest veil, the veil of the believer, the attribute of the Throne, the Pedestal, the Tablet, the Pen, the veils of the spirits of believers, unbelievers and the dissidents and 'how' and 'why' [they are so] are known through this book. Moreover, [the account of] existence, non-existence, the knowledge of the Exalted Lord, glorified be His majesty, five angels in the seven divine and human cycles is known [11] through this book. Also, the seven debates between Iblis and Adam and the total creation whether it is possible or impossible to comprehend and imagine, has been revealed in this book from the discourses of Bāqir, may peace be upon us from him, for 'He it is Who has revealed unto thee the Book wherein are clear signs—they are the *Umm al-kitāb*, and others are *mutashābihāt*' [Qur'ān, 3:7]. This book is named the *Umm al-kitāb* of Bāqir, and is the *Umm al-kitāb* of Bāqir al-'Ilm, may peace be upon us from him. [12]

When Bāqir was born and came into existence, he said to [his mother] Āminah, the 'mother of all believers', 'The *āyāt* (signs) which are clear are the *Umm al-kitāb*' [Qur'ān, 3:7]. When he was sent to school, the divine power (*farrah-i izzādī*) of wisdom and inspirational knowledge (*'ilm-i ta'yīdī*)<sup>1</sup> manifested through him which no teacher knew. Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī narrates that when Bāqir al-'Ilm, may peace be upon us from him, was only a child of five he was sent for education to 'Abd Allāh Ṣabbāḥ. 'Abd Allāh, according [13] to the custom of the teachers, gave him a clean silver tablet on which twenty-nine letters of the alphabet were written. He said to him. 'Recite *alif* [the first letter of the Arabic alphabet]'. Bāqir said, '*Alif*'. Then 'Abd Allāh said 'recite *bā*' [the second letter of the Arabic alphabet]'. Bāqir said, 'Until you explain to me the meaning of *alif* I will not recite *bā*'. 'Abd Allāh said, 'O the delight of the eyes of believers, O Bāqir, recite *alif*'. Then he said, '*Alif* is for Allāh, 'there is no deity save Him the Ever-living the Self-subsistent' [Qur'ān, 2:255]'. [Bāqir] said O 'Abd Allāh, '*Alif* [or A in the word] 'Allāh' stands for God and [the letter] *lām* stands for Muḥammad. *Alif* signifies the spirit of Muḥammad.

1. The term *ta'yīd* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *ayyada*. The notion of *ta'yīd* conveys the idea of assistance and divine inspiration which is a source of supernatural wisdom. This notion is derived from the two verses of the Qur'ān (2:87 and 253) in which God says about Jesus, 'We inspired him (*ayyadnāhu*) with the Holy Spirit'.

It consists of three letters and a [diacritical] point, [14] which are *alif*, *lām*, *fā'* and the *nuqṭah* [the point]. *Alif* stands for Muḥammad, *lām* for 'Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib], *fā'* for Fāṭimah, and *nuqṭah* for Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. [The two names] Ḥasan and Ḥusayn end with *nuqṭah* so does *alif*.

'Abd Allāh was astonished to hear [this explanation] and said, 'O the light of the eyes of believers, this [knowledge] is strange. What thou art saying regarding the description and a characteristic of *alif* is not from any book written by a man'. Bāqir replied, 'That is how the book of us, the *ahl al-bayt* [the family of the Prophet], has been in every cycle and period. O 'Abd Allāh, *alif* [corresponds to] the place of the throne and seat of God, the Mighty and Majestic. [15] It is called the Vital Rational Spirit (*rūḥ al-ḥayāt-i nāṭiqah*) which [dwells] in the brain of the believers. *Lām* corresponds to the Luminous Spirit (*rūḥ-i rawshanī*), *fā'* to the Spirit of Invincibility (*rūḥ al-jabarūt*), and *nuqṭah* to the Reflective Spirit (*rūḥ al-fikr*). Above the non-spherical *alif* there is a spirit which is the veil of 'Alī, may peace be upon us from him. *Alif* also corresponds to the spirit of 'Alī, *lām* to the radiance of 'Alī, *fā'* to the reflection of the spirit of revelation of 'Alī, and *nuqṭah* to the luminous speech of 'Alī which encompasses the thirty letters [of the alphabet].

'Abd Allāh Ṣabbāḥ was greatly astonished [to hear such an explanation] so he said, 'O son of the Messenger of God, by God, indeed by God the most exalted, this is the divine guidance. I have never heard such knowledge from any master before. How strange that thou hast been sent to learn from me! How strange that thou who hast never been sent to any teacher before, nor hast read a book nor hast seen any learned man [to speak of such astonishing knowledge]! O the fruit of the heart of the believers, what kind of situation is this. For, it is not lawful for anyone to teach a science to people when he himself is ignorant of it. I wanted to teach thee *alif*; I never knew that I would end up learning from thee. O the light of the eyes of Muḥammad and 'Alī, complete [thy] favour by giving me the explanation of [the letters] *bā'* and *tā'*. May [God's] mercy be upon thy parents'. [17]

Bāqir replied, 'O my learned teacher, *bā'* is the threshold of *alif*. *Alif* [corresponds] to Muḥammad, and *bā'* to 'Alī. The [diacritical] point under *bā'* corresponds to the speech of 'Alī. *Alif* [is like] the Luminous Spirit, and *bā'* the Vital Spirit of the brain, whereas the diacritical point is like the speech (*nuṭq*). O my learned teacher, tell me what is the first letter of the alphabet?' 'Abd Allāh replied, '*Alif*'. Bāqir said, 'By what reasoning?' 'Abd Allāh replied, 'O the light of the eyes of the believers, I do not know more than this'. Then Bāqir said, 'O 'Abd Allāh, all these learned people [18] are really ignorant teachers. They really do not know whether *alif* is the first [letter of the alphabet] or *bā'*. The first letter of the alphabet is *bā'*, and then comes *alif*. *Bā'* stands for 'Alī, and *alif* stands for Muḥammad. Outwardly Muhammad is prior [to 'Alī] and 'Alī is the threshold (*bāb*) of Muḥammad. [Just as] in order to enter the house one has to go through the gate, [similarly] in order to reach Muḥammad [one has to go] through 'Alī. Both Muḥammad and 'Alī are

one [reality, as] *alif* and *bā'* are one [reality]. The [diacritical] point of *alif* is hidden, [similarly] the speech of Muḥammad is [in the] veiled [form]. But the [diacritical] point of *bā'* is manifest [like] the speech of 'Alī which is manifest by [19] the light of knowledge. These infidels who are from the nest of Ahrīman know the way (*sharī'ah*) of Muḥammad, and they protect it, but as for the way (*sharī'ah*) of 'Alī, they have no knowledge about it. For Muḥammad is [like] this world and 'Alī the next world. The truth of this matter is affirmed by the saying of Him the Exalted, 'They know the outward significance of the life of this world, but of the next world they are heedless' [Qur'ān, 30:7].

[Bāqir continued, and said,] 'O 'Abd Allāh, is the first letter of the alphabet the point or *bā'*?' 'Abd Allāh replied, 'O the light of the eyes of Muḥammad I do not know unless I hear from you.' Bāqir said, 'the first letter of the [Arabic, or Persian] alphabets [20] is the 'point'. The point [corresponds] to the speech of the believers who are attributed with speech. *Bā'* corresponds to the Spirit which [dwells] between the two eyebrows, and *alif* [corresponds to] the physical body. So [the alphabets] begin by the point, followed by *bā'* and then *alif*. O 'Abd Allāh, you are my learned teacher, [tell me] out of the two which one is bigger *alif* or camel.' 'Abd Allāh replied, [21] 'I know neither the *alif* nor the camel unless I hear from you.' Bāqir said, 'The *alif* [is bigger.] It is the Luminous Spirit (*rūḥ-i rawshanā'ī*). The love and brotherhood amongst the believers are due to it. The camel is [also] a spirit. In spirituality its name is 'rational soul' (*naḥs-i nāṭiqah*). Then 'Abd Allāh said, 'O the fruit of the heart of the believers, is it true, what they say, that *alif* is bigger [than the camel] because in writing it is possible to stretch *alif* as much as one could?' Bāqir replied, '*Alif* [corresponds to] the Spirit [whose seat is] the brain. It is called the Spirit of Faith (*rūḥ-i imān*) and is above the Vital Conscious Spirit (*rūḥ al-ḥayāt-i nāṭiqah*). It testifies to eight other Spirits which are above it and are interconnected within the Spirit of Faith which englobes [everything] from the earth to the heaven. The first one is the Spirit of Preservation (*rūḥ-i ḥifẓ*) of the Guarded Tablet of the Exalted King. It is concealed within the Spirit of Faith. [22] The next one is the Spirit of Reflection (*rūḥ-i fikr*) of the Pen of the [Guarded] Tablet. It is concealed within the Spirit of Preservation. Then comes the Spirit of Invincibility (*rūḥ-i jabarūt*), which is concealed within the Spirit of Reflection. The next one is the Spirit of Knowledge (*rūḥ al-'ilm*) which is concealed within the Spirit of Invincibility. Then there is the Spirit of Intellect (*rūḥ al-'aql*) which is concealed within the Spirit of Knowledge. Then there is the Sacred Spirit (*rūḥ-i quddūs*) which is concealed within the Spirit of Intellect. The next one is the Supreme Spirit (*rūḥ al-akbar*) which is the Universal Spirit (*rūḥ-i kullī*); it is hidden in the Sacred Spirit. Finally there is the Sublime Spirit (*rūḥ-i a'ẓam*) which is hidden in the Supreme Spirit. [23] O 'Abd Allāh, all of them are interconnected, hence it is said *alif* is bigger [than the camel]'

## Question XII

Then Jābir said, 'O [251] my Lord, what is the Qur'ān?'

Bāqir replied, 'The Qur'ān is the Eloquent Spirit (*rūḥ-i nāṭiqah*), as the Exalted Sovereign said, 'This is our Book which speaks to you the Truth' [Qur'ān, 45:28]. It signifies that our Book is the true Word and Speech. In the macrocosm Salmān al-Qudrah is the chant of the Exalted Sovereign. [This chant] is his speech from the Spirit of Enunciation. Salmān is also the Last Day and the Great Day. 'The Qur'ān is the Speech (*kalām*) of God which is uncreated, so whoever says it is created is an unbeliever in God, the Almighty. That is to say, this Salmān al-Qudrah<sup>1</sup> is [252] the Qur'ān and the chant of God. Whosoever does not testify to it is an unbeliever in God. O Jābir, the significance of this discourse is that the Qur'ān is the speech of God which is the uncreated Salmān. Likewise, the chant (*āwāz*) of the Exalted Sovereign is uncreated unlike the Dissident Spirits, so 'whoever says it is created is an unbeliever in God the Sublime'. It signifies that these unbelievers have been manifested by the chant of 'Azāzīl and have [therefore] become unbelievers in the Exalted Sovereign, both in the Macrocosm and in the Microcosm. When the Exalted Sovereign said, 'He is the Lord of those who believe, and the disbelievers have no Lord', [Qur'ān, 47:12] He indicated that, He was not the Lord [253] of the concupiscent soul, nor of the reprov'd anima.

'The Eloquent Spirit also effuses benevolence, quietude and compassion upon the Pacified Spirit (*rūḥ-i muṭma'innah*). But it does not benefit the Captive Spirit (*rūḥ-i ḥabsī*), the Concupiscent Soul (*naḥs-i ḥissī*) and the dissident Adam; rather [it causes] their destruction. Muḥammad, to whom the Qur'ān was revealed, is the Pacified Spirit [which dwells] in this heart which is placed at the centre of the seven firmaments and twelve constellations.'

Then Jābir said, 'O my Lord, do elucidate its meaning'. Bāqir replied, 'This earth which is called the 'heart' [254] is placed amidst the four natures. The water is wetness, the air is sanguine, the fire is yellow bile and the earth is black bile. The sphere of the moon is the bone-marrow, the sphere of Venus is the fat, the sphere of the sun is the blood-vessels, the sphere of Mars is the blood, the sphere of Jupiter is the flesh, the sphere of Saturn is the skin, and the Outermost Sphere is the Vital Rational Spirit (*rūḥ al-ḥayāt-i nāṭiqah*) which glorifies Him [the Exalted Sovereign] in all the spheres. 'Everything in the sphere glorifies [Him]' [Qur'ān, 21:33].

From the twelve constellations, six rotate [255] above the earth which are: Aries which [corresponds] to the head, Taurus to neck, Gemini to hands, Cancer to chest, Leo to abdomen, Virgo to back. These six constellation signs are

1. Here Salmān al-Qudrah is the gnostic name of Salmān al-Fārsī. He was a Persian who was taken into the household of the Prophet. Later he became the model of spiritual adoption and mystical initiation in Shi'ism and Sufism. Cf. Louis Massignon, 'Salmān Pāk et les prémices spirituelles de l'Islam iranien', *Société des études iraniennes*, 7 (1934). repr. in *Opera Minora* (Damascus 1957), I, pp. 443–483.

placed above the heart. Six [constellations] are below the heart which are navel [corresponding] to Libra, the genitals to Scorpio, thighs to Sagittarius, knees to Capricorn, legs to Aquarius, and feet to Pisces. These constellations are placed below the heart.

The Pacified Spirit is [the symbol] of Muḥammad. The Light of Effulgence (*nūr-i rawshanāʾi*) passes from the Eloquent Spirit to all parts of the body via the white vein and then enters the heart and awakens the Dissident Spirit (*rūḥ-i muʿtariḍah*) from the slumber of heedlessness. This Spirit-Light is connected to the White Sea of the Macrocosm and Microcosm and from there to the heart.

### Question XIII

Then Jaʿfar-i Juʿfi got up and said, ‘O my Lord, what kind of state is this that at times I see dreams which cannot be narrated to anyone; at times I see strange things in the dreams which have not been seen in the waking state?’

Bāqir al-ʿIlm replied, ‘If you see any dream of the moon, the sun, the angels, the cherubs in this azure dome, [then know that] that is seen by the Luminous Spirit. A dream of the Prophets, the Imams, and the heavens is seen by the Spirit that has been tested (*rūḥ-i mumtaḥanah*); a dream about the state and condition of the world is seen by the Pacified Soul, and the dream which depicts murder, killing, adultery with women and pollution is seen by the Concupiscent Soul. Any time the Luminous Spirit transfers itself and departs from the summit of the Spirit that has been tested; the Spirit of the heart enters into the slumber of heedlessness. When the Conscious Spirit leaves the brain the Spirit of the heart goes into the sleep of ignorance. When the Pacified soul departs the whole body dies including the Concupiscent Soul and everything that is there in the body’.

### Question XV

Abuʿl-Khaṭṭāb<sup>1</sup> got up and recited the prayer of benediction and then said, ‘O my Lord, if it is not heavy for you then [please] explain [the meaning of] the Throne of the Exalted Sovereign as well as Bayt al-maʿmūr of Adam, the Ark of Noah, the birds of Abraham, the Mount Sinai of Moses, the birth of Jesus, the ascension (*miʾrāj*) of Muḥammad, and the [sword] Dhuʿl-fiqār of ʿAlī, to this weak servant and illuminate his rusted heart so that this servant is liberated by Thy [knowledge] and becomes Thy well-wisher’.

Bāqir al-ʿIlm replied, ‘O Abū Khālid Kābili (sic) [266], these seven cycles constitute the seven manifestations [whose knowledge] with such clarity was not given to anyone by the Exalted King except to Muḥammad, as He said, ‘Say: the knowledge

1. Abuʿl-Khaṭṭāb, a Kūfan from the tribe of Asad, was one of the chief *dāʾīs* of Imam Jaʿfar al-Šādiq. He died around 145/762. Cf. *El2*.

is with God only' [Qur'ān, 67:26]. [It means] 'O Muḥammad, only God and those who are proximate to Him know the knowledge of Resurrection'. There are many learned and enlightened theologians but they have no access to this knowledge. [I seek] protection [with God]! Attention! We have not read about this discourse in any book; nor have we written it in any book. This discourse has not been revealed to any prophet. You should safeguard it [267] as much as you can. Read it day and night to the believers and the obedient ones. The believers to whom this book reaches in inheritance should safeguard it and read it alone by themselves.

The first temple [of God], al-Bayt al-ma'mūr, was revealed to Adam. Adam is the Lord; He is the Spirit whose seat is the frontal lobe of the brain. One wall of the temple al-Bayt al-ma'mūr is made of pure silver, one is of red gold, one is of verdant chrysolite, and one is made of [268] red ruby. Its floor is made of yellow carnelians and its roof is made of white pearl. These are [the symbols of] six Spirits of different colours. The silver wall is [the symbol] of the Spirit of Faith; the gold wall [symbolizes] the Spirit of Preservation (*rūḥ-i ḥifẓ*); the chrysolite wall that of the Spirit of Invincibility; the ruby wall that of the Sacred Spirit. The floor which is made of carnelians is [the symbol of] the Spirit of Knowledge; the roof of the temple which is made of white pearl is the [symbol of the] Supreme Universal Spirit (*rūḥ al-akbar-i kull*), as [He] the most exalted says, 'By the Mount and the scripture inscribed on fine parchment unrolled, and the al-Bayt al-ma'mūr and the exalted roof and the sea kept filled' [Qur'ān, 52:1–6].

### Question XVI

Abu'l-Khālid Kābili [269] said, 'O my Lord, what is the meaning of the Ark of Noah?'

Bāqir replied, 'The Ark is also a [symbol] of the Spirits. The four walls of the Ark [symbolize] the Spirit of Faith, the Spirit of Preservation, the Spirit of Reflection and the Spirit of Knowledge. The roof of the Ark [symbolizes] the Luminous Consciousness (*nuṭq-i nūr*); the anchors ... the sail of the Ark is the Extreme Temperament (*mizāj-i ghāyatī*); Noah is the Conscious Spirit, as [He], The Exalted said, 'And we carried him upon a thing of planks and nails' [Qur'ān, 54:13].

As for the four birds of Moses, one of them was the eagle, one was the peacock, one was the vulture, [270] and one was the heron. Abraham [symbolizes] the Vital Conscious Spirit which [dwells] in the frontal lobe of the brain and is the Lord of the Sublime Spirit. The eagle is the Spirit of Faith; the heron is the Reflective Spirit; the august Humā is the Sacred Spirit; and Vulture is the Spirit of Intellect which is the life of the Spirit of hearts (*rūḥ al-qulūb*). Whereas the Reflective Spirit is their captive, as He the Exalted said, 'Take four birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place one of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste' [Qur'ān, 2:260].



[271] Moses is the Vital Conscious Luminous Spirit. The rod of Moses is speech (*nutq*); Mount Sinai is the Spirit of Faith. [As He said,] 'We caused the Mount to tower above them.' [Qur'ān, 4:154]. The Pen is the Reflective Spirit; Gabriel is the Spirit of Invincibility; and God is the Sacred Spirit. Moses desired to see the beauty of the Exalted Sovereign, but He said, 'O Moses, you cannot see. Go and look at the Mount so that you see My power [Qur'ān, 7:143]'. Moses looked at the Mount. The Exalted King emanated His splendour on the Mount which was shattered to pieces and Moses went into prostration. It means the Vital Spirit [272] of the brain is Moses. It is possible to see God by the Spirit of Faith, and Mount [Sinai] is the Spirit of Faith. The Splendour of the divine manifestation cannot settle on anything but the Spirit of Faith; it settles on the mount, [i.e.,] the heart of the believer. The splendour is the divine manifestation in the heart through the vein of Solar wind in which there is no blood. It signifies the manifestation of the Sublime Spirit, as He the Exalted said, 'And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said, 'My Lord, show me [Thy self], that I may gaze upon Thee'. He said 'Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the Mountain. If [273] it stands still in its place, then thou wilt see Me'. And when his Lord revealed [His] glory to the Mountain, He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless' [Qur'ān, 7:143].

In reality [the word] Sinai is composed of seven letters and three dots. They [symbolize] the seven Spirits [dwelling] over the brain of the believers about which it has already been explained in many places.

There are three other Spirits beyond [those seven] whose names cannot be written in any book. The Pacified Soul ascends to this place through the vein of the Solar wind for the inner litany (*munājāt*) and [274] converses with the Sublime Spirit on this Mount Sinai which is an ensemble of seven mountains standing over each other. These are the seven spirits of seven colours from the seven thresholds and spheres (*dīwān*). They are: the Unified Spirit of Faith, the Spirit of Preservation, the Reflective Spirit, the Spirit of Invincibility, the Spirit of Knowledge, the Spirit of Intellect, and the seventh one is the Sacred Spirit.

The three Spirits above it are: the Supreme Spirit, the Sublime Spirit and the Extreme Temperament which is above everything. Moses is the Spirit of hearts; the Scripture Torah is the Vital Conscious Spirit [275]; the Israelites [symbolize] the Spirit in the liquid chamber [of the heart] and the Awaiting [Spirit] in the chamber of blood. The Spirit of Faith dwells above the Conscious Spirit. Those [Spirits] which are in the heart accept [the Spirit of Faith]. When it detaches from them, they fall in the sleep of heedlessness. He the Exalted said, "When we shook the mount above them as it were a covering, and they supposed that it was going to fall upon them [and we said]' 'Hold fast that which We have given you and remember that which is therein, that ye may be pious." [Qur'ān, 7:171]

Jesus [symbolizes] [276] the Spirit of the brain; his mother Mary is the Spirit of Faith. At the time of giving birth [to Jesus] she went to the Siloan fountain. At

the edge of the fountain was a palm tree which was dried up. The fountain which was also dried up, started flowing with water by the grace of Jesus, and the tree also became green and fresh. Jesus could not separate from his mother, so God the Exalted and Sublime sent His Spirit of Revelation to Jesus that he should tell his mother to shake the palm tree so that the ripe dates fall down which she should eat so that her labour pain eases. So Jesus called his mother from the womb and said, 'O [277] mother, shake this tree so that the ripe dates fall; then eat those dates so that I am born without incurring any pain to you'. So Mary shook the palm tree, the ripe dates fell down which she ate and Jesus was born [without much pain].

Jesus [is the symbol of] the Vital Conscious Luminous Spirit, which calls from beneath the Spirit of Faith by the power of the Extreme Temperament which is Gabriel. After every hour it kicks the tree which is the Spirit of Reflection, and drops different kinds of knowledge which become sustenance for the Spirit [of Reflection] and [for many other] Spirits. Mary is the Spirit of Faith. The green tree is the Spirit of Reflection which is of verdant colour [278]. It contemplates upon the divine sciences without having read or heard [any sciences], and comes to fruition like a date. Gabriel is the Spirit of Invincibility. It is connected with the coming and going between the Conscious [Spirit] and the Azure Dome, and is the Lord of the Extreme Temperament. Beneath it is Jesus, the Sacred Spirit. Mary is the Rational Spirit (*rūh-i nātiqah*); the palm-tree is the Spirit of Faith, and the fountain is the Light of God, the Sublime Spirit. As He the Exalted said, 'And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm-tree. She said 'O, would I that I had died ere this and become a thing of naught, forgotten'. Then [one] cried unto her from below her, saying: 'Grieve not. Thy Lord hath placed a brook beneath thee. And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee' [Qur'ān, 19:22–25].

### Question XVII

Abu'l-Khālīd Kābilī said, 'O my Lord, what is [the significance of] Muḥammad and his Ascension (*mi'rāj*)?'

Bāqir replied, 'As for the Ascension of Muḥammad, first of all the Exalted King sent Gabriel to the earth. Muḥammad was sleeping. [Gabriel] said [to him], 'Wake up. This is not the time of the night [280] for you to sleep. "O thou wrapped up in thy raiment! Rise, the night ..." [Qur'ān, 73:1–2]. Muḥammad sat on Burāq and went to the Sacred Precinct (*al-Bayt al-muqaddas*). There he put his foot on the rock, and from there he crossed the seven heavens and reached at 'two bows'-length'. From there he ascended to the throne, then to the Pedestal, Tablet, and Pen and then he crossed five thousand veils and reached in the presence of the Exalted King where he spoke and listened to ninety thousand words. Then he returned to his house.

His bed was still warm. The news [of his ascension] spread among the Arabs [281] who did not believe it.

[Its interpretation:] The Sublime Spirit sent the revelation to the heart of Muḥammad, that means to the heart of the believer. Muḥammad is that Spirit which dwells in the right half of the heart in the house of the Pure Wind. The Burāq signifies the fulguration of Light; the ascension (*mi'rāj*) is the ascension of the vein of Solar Wind which connects the heart to the brain and bifurcates in seven ramifications. In this vein and nerve [?] there is no blood but Pure Wind and the passage for the Light and illumination of the Sublime Spirit. It is connected to the heart [and the brain] which is [like] the ascension from the earth to the sky. Whatever [282] the seven organs—the [organs] of sight, hearing, smell, touch and speech—do the information reaches the heart sooner than the twinkling of an eye [like] 'be, and it becomes'. This vein is called the jugular vein. As He the Exalted said, '[We] are nearer to him than his jugular vein' [Qur'ān, 50:16]. The colour of this vein is similar to white milk. The manifestation of the Spirit of the Light of Gabriel reaches the heart through this vein to the Pacified Soul and awakens this Spirit from the sleep of heedlessness and resurrects it [283] whereby it accepts the manifestation of the Spirit of Faith while sitting on Burāq. Its coming to this vein means the ascension (*mi'rāj*). Its coming to the lips, mouth and tongue means reaching the Sacred Precinct (*Bayt al-muqaddas*). Its reaching the teeth is like putting the feet on the Rock; when it crosses the seven lights which are on the face of man, it is like crossing the seven heavens, as He the Exalted said, 'He stood poised again being on the higher horizon' [Qur'ān, 53:6–7]. When it comes between the eyebrows, it is like reaching the two bows'-length, [284] 'two bows'-length away or nearer' [Qur'ān, 53:9]. When it reaches the Vital Spirit of the frontal lobe of the brain, it is like reaching the Throne; when it reaches the Spirit of Faith it is like reaching the Pedestal; when it reaches the Spirit of Preservation it is like reaching the Tablet; when it reaches the Reflective Spirit it is like reaching the Pen; when it crosses the Spirit of Invincibility, the Spirit of Knowledge, the Spirit of Intellect, the Sacred Spirit, the Supreme Spirit, it is like crossing five hundred thousand veils. When it reaches the Sublime Spirit it is like reaching the Lord of eighteen thousand worlds. The manifestation of piety, [285] humility, fear [of God], hope, [and] trust [in God], certainty and love from the Pacified Spirit are like speaking seventy thousand words.

The Extreme Temperament, the Divine Breath, the Solar Illumination, the Divine communion, the Credent Look, the Trumpet of Isrāfīl [proceed] from the Spirit that has been Tested. [It reaches] the Spirit of the Heart and illuminates the [Pacified] Spirit which is like listening to seventy thousand words. When it returns to the heart [it is like returning] to his bed which was still warm. When the [Spirit] narrates the significance [of this ascension], the Sensitive Spirit—the Dissident Captive Adam—does not believe it for it is [286] constantly preoccupied with doing

evil and satanic insinuation and is dumb and deaf. Whoever is preoccupied with the [satanic] whispering holds a primal grade [in the matters pertaining to evil]. So this is the significance of the Ascension.

The [the sword] Dhu'l-fiḡār of 'Alī signifies the Luminous Vital Conscious Spirit. Dhu'l-fiḡār is the Spirit of Faith, the Lord of the believers, the oppressed ones, the worthy ones and the paupers. Ṣamṣām is the Spirit of Preservation; Qamqām is the Reflective Spirit; and Ḍarghām is the Spirit of Knowledge. Islam and the [state] of being a Muslim becomes complete by the four swords of 'Alī, [287] as the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Islam becomes complete by the four swords of 'Alī. A Muslim is the one who follows Islam. The four swords [of 'Alī], Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, [and] Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafīyyah, the meaning of the Qā'im (Resurrector, or Messiah), the miracles of the Qā'im also signify the Vital Spirit of the brain. The miracle of the fire means the manifestation of the [Spirit of] Faith. The Qā'im will carry a red flag which signifies the Sacred Spirit. He will brandish a white sword that means, the Conscious Spirit having three hundred and thirteen emissaries who will form the army of the Resurrector. They are the same seven Spirits which are above the Spirit of Faith about which it has been explained in several places [288]. They are three hundred and three [in number]; that is thirteen and three, plus ten which is one [make fourteen divided by two]. The result is seven which signify the seven manifestations of the Prophets.'<sup>1</sup>

### Question XX

Then Muḥammad ibn Mufaḍḍal got up and said, 'I render my gratitude to the Sublime, the Sacred, [and] the Sacred, the Sublime. [303] Indeed Muḥammad and 'Alī are truly worthy of praise by God [and] are the chosen ones, so are his progeny, [Salmān] al-Salsāl and Abu'l-Khaṭṭāb'. Then Ja'far-i Ju'fī said, 'How does one interpret the verse of God in which He said, 'Are then they who disbelieve not aware that the heavens and the earth were [once] one single entity, which We then parted asunder?' [Qur'ān, 21:29]'

Bāqir replied, 'God says, 'O the heedless, the intolerant and the unbelievers, aren't you aware that the earth and the heavens at the beginning of the creation were one entity; then we divided it into two halves. From the one half we created seven levels [304] of the heaven, and from the other half we created seven levels of the earth. This signifies the quality of the semen (*nutfah*) which in its primal nature is

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1. This is in reference to the concept of Ismaili sacred history of religion which is divided into seven cycles, each cycle founded by a speaker-prophet, *nāṭiq*. The seven *nāṭiqs* are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and Qā'im (or Messiah). The first six are the revealers of the divine *sharā'i* (laws); the last one would unveil the inner truths of all the *sharā'i* revealed to the speaker-prophets. Cf. H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, tr. R. Manheim and J. W. Morris (London, 1983), especially pp. 84–99.

a drop of liquid, from which [it is transformed into] a human seed, then to a clot, and a lump of flesh until from half of it the head is created with eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth [which correspond to the seven heavens]. From the other half, the lower part [of the body] is created [which constitutes] the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, the bladder, pancreas and kidneys which [correspond to] the seven [levels] of the earth. The earth in reality is the heart which is centred amidst the seven humours, [as He said], 'And the earth, He expanded it after that' [Qur'ān, 79:30].

Ja'far-i Ju'fī said, 'O my Lord, they say that this earth stands on the back of the cow. [Is it true?]

Bāqir replied, 'Yes it is true. The earth stands on the back of the cow; the cow stands on the fish and the fish is in the water; the water is on the stone and that stone is held on the palm of the hand of an angel. The seven heavens and the earth are held in suspension [by the angel]. O Ja'far-i Ju'fī, the earth [corresponds to] the heart; the seven levels of the earth are [like] the seven humours which are located from above the heavens till their base. The cow is the Awaiting Spirit (*rūḥ-i muntazirah*) which is inside the oceans. The fish is the feet and the ocean [306] is the Universal Spirit which pervades [the whole body] from the top of the head till the nails of the toes. The stones are these bones which are the resting place of the Spirit, and the Spirit is the movement (*raftār*) of the angel who holds everything in the palm of his hand and moves it wherever he wishes'.

### Question XXVII

Abū Khālid said, 'O Walī of the time (*walī al-zamān*), if it is not too heavy for you then enlighten me on the meaning by inner interpretation and real meaning [of the chapters of the Qur'ān and the places where they were revealed].'

Bāqir al-'Ilm, peace be upon us from him, replied, 'The first [*sūrah*] *al-Ḥamd* was revealed in Mecca; *Sūrat al-Baqarah* was revealed in Mecca; *Āl 'Imrān* was revealed in Medina; *Sūrat al-Nisā'* in Baṣra; *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* in Damascus; *Sūrat al-An'ām* in Jerusalem; *Sūrat al-A'rāf* in Yemen and Yathrib; *Sūrat al-Anfāl* in Kūfa and the remaining hundred and five chapters were revealed in all parts of the universe. The *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, *Alif. Lām. Mīm*. This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who are pious' [2:1-2], is the Vital Spirit of the frontal lobe of the brain symbolizing the Cycle of Adam. Mecca is the forehead, because the Vital Spirit descends from the azure [celestial] dome to the frontal lobe of the brain. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, *Alif. Lām. Mīm*. Allāh! There is no God save Him' [Qur'ān, 3:1-2] is the Spirit of Audition symbolizing the Cycle of Noah. It descends from the spheres of stars to these ears. The ears symbolize Medina. *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, 'O mankind, [357] be pious to your Lord' [4:1] is the Spirit of Vision and symbolizes the Cycle of Abraham. It was revealed in Baṣra, and Baṣra [in Arabic] means vision. This Spirit descends from the sun to the vision (*baṣrah*). *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, 'O ye who believe,

fulfill your undertaking' [4:1], was revealed in Syria. This is the Olfactory Spirit. It descends from the wind and joins the sense of smell, and symbolizes the Cycle of Moses. *Sūrah al-An'ām*, 'Praise be to God, Who has created the heavens and the earth' [6:1], is the Spirit of Speech. It was revealed in Jerusalem. [358] It descends from the thunder and lightning. Jerusalem is the tongue and lips and symbolizes the Cycle of Jesus. *Sūrah al-A'raf*, *Alif. Lām. Mīm. Šād*. It is a Scripture' [Qur'ān, 7:1–2], is the Spirit of Touch. It manifests from the air in the hands for revealing Islam. All the books, [as well as] writing and learning manifest through the hands. It symbolizes the Cycle of Muḥammad in Yemen and Yathrib. *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, 'They ask thee about the spoils of war' [8:1], is the Spirit of Movement, it is the symbol of the cycle of 'Alī. It was revealed in Kūfa that is, in the sole of the feet. It comes down from the moon and joins [359] the sole of the feet. Out of one hundred and five *sūrahs*, one hundred are [equal] to one and when five are added to it, the [total] becomes six. They [symbolize] the Spirit of Taste, the Vegetative Soul which pervades the whole body, and four other [Spirits] which reside in the heart about which it has already been explained. They descended upon Muḥammad of the Microcosm, [i.e.,] upon the Pacified Spirit which is the particular servant of the Exalted Sovereign about which the saying of 'Allāh' the Mighty and Sublime confirms, 'Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His servant the Furqān' [Qur'ān, 25:1]. The seven verses of [*Sūrat al-*] *Ḥamd* which are prior to *Sūrat al-Baqarah* are the seven [360] Spirits which are above the Vital Conscious Spirit. They are of seven colours and have descended from the seven spheres upon Mecca, that is, the frontal [lobe of the brain] which is the seat of the Divine. Their seven legatees such as, piety, humility, reliance [upon God], trustworthiness, faithfulness, certitude [in God], and illumination form twice-[repeated] seven [legatees] as He the Exalted, said, 'We have given thee seven of the twice-[repeated verses] and the great Qur'ān' [Qur'ān, 15:87].

Physically, this heart, and the Spirit which is in it, is *Sūrat* [361] *al-Baqarah* and [symbolizes] the Cycle of Adam. It proceeds from the celestial sphere of the Resistant Spirits. *Āl al-Imrān* is the Cycle of Noah. It symbolizes the [sense of] touch which proceeds from the celestial sphere of the Noble Ones (*najībān*). *Sūrat al-Nisā'* is the Cycle of Abraham. It symbolizes the [faculty of] speech. It proceeds from the celestial sphere of the Chiefs (*naqībān*). *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* is the Cycle of Moses. It symbolizes the [sense of] smell and proceeds from the celestial sphere of Bā-Dharr [i.e., Abū Dharr Ghifārī]. *Sūrat al-An'ām* symbolizes the [sense of] sight and is the Cycle of Jesus. [It proceeds from] the celestial sphere of Miqdād. *Sūrat al-A'raf* is the Cycle of Muḥammad and symbolizes the [sense of] hearing. It proceeds from the celestial sphere of Salmān al-Qudrah. *Sūrat al-Anfāl* [362] is the symbol of the Cycle of the Resurrector (Qā'im). It is the Conscious Spirit and symbolizes the Exalted Sovereign. This Microcosm becomes complete by those six Spirits and six celestial spheres as He the Exalted said, 'Lo, your Lord is "Allah" Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then He mounted the Throne' [Qur'ān, 7:54].

O Abū Khālid, this Spirit which is called the Conscious [Spirit] is the Celestial Dome; its speech is the Sun; [its] mouth is Bayt al-ma'mūr, for the Sun rises from the Bayt al-ma'mūr [363], and the six stars which constantly rotate are Nashīdar, Nashīdar-i Māh, Nashīdar-i Tābān, Samī'ā, Bahman and Kafū. Once in thirty years one of them glances at this world and manifests luminous hair in such a way that the whole world could see it'.

### Question XXVIII

Then Abū Khālid said, 'O my Lord, do complete Thy gratitude upon me by revealing [the meaning of] this doctrine to me'.

Bāqir replied, 'The Sun is the Consciousness (*nuṭq*) which is manifested through the Spirit of the brain. The Nashīdar, the Nashīdar-i Māh and the Nashīdar-i Tābān are the right eye, right ear and the right nostril. The Samī'ā, Bahman and Kafū are the left eye, left ear and the left nostril. Thirty years signify thirty letters from which the speech is formulated, and their recognition is through these thirty letters. The Universe is the heart. The two Spirits in the heart realize [their plight] and yearn for their salvation. They cause affliction to the other two Spirits and turn their face upward. The Sun which is going to rise from the west on the Day of Resurrection is the Spirit which [dwells] in the heart which is the House of Pure Wind. The Moon is the Captive Vital Spirit. [365] When this Spirit reaches the Moon it is cultivated by the light of the Moon. The six lights are connected to the six veins which are the locus of smell, hearing, sight, speech, which in turn are connected to the heart, and from there to the arteries of the head which surround this Spirit. They persist in that state so that outwardly they see, hear and speak everything, and also inwardly they see and hear things and speak. When this Spirit rises from the heart, it is like rising from the Occident of the horizon. When it arrives at the top of the chest, it is like mounting [the Throne]. When it arrives at the lips, tongue and mouth, it is like reaching the Orient [366]. When it reaches the brain, it is like reaching the veil of the Celestial Dome, as He the Exalted said, 'Therefore pray unto God making religion pure for Him, however much the disbelievers be averse. The Exalter of the ranks, the Lord of the Throne. He casteth the Spirit of His command' [Qur'ān, 40:14–15]. This [verse] signifies that the Lord of the Microcosm evokes the Conscious Spirit by the illumination of the Spirit of Faith of the Devotees who dwell in the right half of the heart. Also, it reveals to it the Light of Prophecy so that it loathes and humiliates the dissident Concupiscent [Spirit], [367] and rises to a higher degree which is the Divine Throne, [i.e.,] the [vital] Spirit of the brain, by the [Divine] command and order. All the [Divine] commands and prohibitions are for the [Concupiscent] Spirit. Canonical prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and poor-tax are obligatory for this Spirit so that it fulfils them in the required order and as a consequence becomes obedient and docile'.

### Question XXIX

Then Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī said, ‘O my Lord, how does one know the meaning of this doctrine?’

Bāqir replied, ‘Five canonical prayers (*namāz*) render the witness to the five stations: a believer is the one who performs his noon prayer with the assembly of the Najīb, [368] the evening prayer with the assembly of the Naqīb, the prayer after sunset with the assembly of Bā-Ḍharr,<sup>1</sup> the night prayer with the assembly of Miqdād and the early morning prayer with the assembly of Salmān. [Then] he stands behind the prayer niche and recites the supplication (*du‘ā*).’

Then Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī said, ‘O my Lord, may my life, possession and blood be sacrificed for Thee. Can you please enlighten me with the meaning of what you said so that the utmost desire of us, the servants, is fulfilled?’

Bāqir replied, ‘By Muḥammad Muḥammad, by ‘Alī ‘Alī. We have not related this discourse anywhere, nor have we written it in any book. It is difficult [to believe], [369] so you should have confidence [in me]. O Jābir, any time the Pacified Spirit faces upwards and reaches the [sense] of touch, and from there to the Spirit which is enjoined by the Wind and gives its testimony, it is like reaching the assembly of the Najīb. When it reaches the [faculty of] speech, it is like reaching the assembly of the Naqīb; when it reaches the olfactory [sense] it is like reaching the assembly of Bā-Ḍharr; when it reaches the sense of sight it is like reaching the assembly of Salmān. When it reaches the brain and reposes on the Spirit of Faith, it manifests the cosmos of Light. The noon canonical prayer is the [symbol of the sense of] touch; the evening canonical prayer [symbolizes the faculty of] speech; [370] the canonical prayer after sunset [symbolizes] the olfactory [sense]; the night canonical prayer signifies [the symbol of] the [sense] of sight; and the morning canonical prayer [symbolizes the sense of] hearing. When the Pacified Spirit traverses these five stations [i.e., five senses] and renders testimony [to God in all these stations] it attains salvation. If not, then it remains in the troubled state, as He the Exalted said, ‘Ah, woe unto worshippers who are heedless of their prayer [Qur’ān, 107:4–5].’

### Question XXX

Jābir said, ‘O my Lord, what is the meaning of fasting?’

Bāqir replied, ‘The Spirit must fast for thirty days which are like thirty letters [of the alphabet]. [In those thirty days] one should not speak to anyone, nor associate with those who are unworthy of this Knowledge of Light which is communicated through the thirty letters [of the alphabet]; nor should he segregate from the

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1. Bā-Ḍharr or Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Salmān al-Fārsī, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and Miqdād are acclaimed by the Shī‘a as the chief supporters of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib’s candidature for the caliphate. Cf. M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shī‘ī Islam*. New Haven, CT, 1985, p. 20.



Brothers of Religion to whom the truth must be revealed; nor should he commit any act of betrayal or dishonesty against them; otherwise its consequence will be grave. After every thirty years, one should fast for twelve months. These thirty letters are constituted of light by which twelve organs [or limbs of the body] are recognized. [After fasting for twelve months] one should fast again for thirty days; detach from everything that is unworthy, and should not associate with infidels, unjust and bigoted people. One should not talk to anyone so that the fasting is proper, [as He the Exalted said,] ‘That ye fast is better for you’ [Qur’ān, 2:184].

Moreover, participating in the battle is incumbent upon the Spirit of the heart. It should prepare itself with the shield, spear and arrow; wear the iron coat; make its bow ready and put the arrow of thirty wooden freckles in its holder and wear it on the waist. Then he should march toward the infidels for waging the holy war (*jihād*) against them, and then annihilate them. The spear [symbolizes] the speech and knowledge of Light; the shield [symbolizes] humility; the iron coat the fear of God; the armour the gentleness, the bow [symbolizes] the lips; the arrow-holder the mouth; the arrow of thirty wooden freckles [symbolizes] the thirty letters [of the alphabet] through which [God] is glorified and [His invocation], ‘There is no god but God’, is recited day and night so that the infidels who have taken hold of the left side of the heart are annihilated [373] together with their soldiers and army such as jealousy, envy, hate, rancour, anger, enmity and greed. This battle [is fought] with humility, as He the Exalted said, ‘And you should fight for the cause of God with your wealth and your lives’ [Qur’ān, 61:11].

When he has completed [the above worship] then he should go for the pilgrimage. He must take the provision and the riding camel, and he should have thirty dinārs of gold of the caliphate in order to cross the desert. Then he should cross the ‘Aqabah of Satan, the robbers, the desert nomads and reach the House of God and pray with six hundred thousand people.

The Spirit which resides in the heart has six limits (*hudūd*). In one respect the House of God [resembles] the heart which has six limits signifying six thousand people. But in the true sense the House of God [374] is the station of the Conscious Spirit. When this Spirit reads, speaks and commands the divine spiritual knowledge through the medium of thirty letters [of the alphabet], it is like having thirty (thousand?) dinārs of the caliphate. When it has crossed the rebuked Adam, it is [like] having crossed the ‘Aqabah of Satan and the other half [of the heart] which is below the ‘Aqabah of Satan. When it has transcended the [qualities such as] recalcitrance, violence, disunity, anger, enmity, and rancour, it is like having crossed the robbers and the desert nomads. When it reaches the white vein in which there is no blood and is connected to the brain and the heart, it is like reaching the way to Medina. [375] When it reaches the mouth it is like crossing a distance of one thousand *farsangs* and reaching the House of God—the station of speech which manifests from a thousand places every day in cold, warm and piquant ways. When it reaches

the Spirit of taste, it is like reaching the well of Zamzam. When it reaches the tip of the tongue, it is like reaching the [mount] ‘Arafāt. When it reaches the six parts of the mouth and becomes preoccupied with divine knowledge, it is like standing for the canonical prayer with six hundred thousand people. When it reaches the [sense of] smell, it is like reaching Marwah. When it reaches the [sense of] sight, it is like reaching Şafā’. Seven times running from Şafā’ to Marwah and from Marwah to Şafā’ [376] [symbolizes traversing] seven layers of the eye. When it reaches the forehead, it is like reaching Mecca. Then it circumambulates around six Spirits near the Divine Throne, and after that it becomes peaceful and pacified as He the Exalted said, ‘And whosoever entereth it is safe. And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto “Allāh” for mankind, for him who can find a way thither’ [Qur’ān, 3:97].

## Jābir ibn Ḥayyān

Jābir ibn Ḥayyān is one of the most mysterious figures in the intellectual history of Islam, at once so famous and so little known that some scholars have even doubted his historical existence. His full name is Abū Mūsā Jābir ibn Ḥayyān al-Kūfī al-Ṭūsī al-Šūfī al-Azdī and he has also been referred to in some texts as Abū ‘Abd Allāh. His name reveals that he was originally from the Arab tribe of Azd, that he was associated with Ṭūs in Khurāsān as well as with Kūfa in Iraq, and that he was a Sufi. Traditional sources claim that he was a disciple of the sixth Shi‘i Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq and lived in the early Abbasid period, that is in the second/eighth century. However, the European scholars of alchemy, Julius Ruska and Paul Kraus, cast doubt on the link between Jābir and the Imam and even upon the very historical authenticity of the figure of Jābir. Kraus, the most important exponent of Jābirean studies in the modern West, even believed the *Jābirean Corpus* to have been composed a full century later than tradition supposed. But many of the arguments offered by Kraus in his monumental study of Jābir concerning the date of the corpus, as well as arguments presented by Ruska concerning the denial of the relationship between Jābir and Imam Ja‘far as it involved the art of alchemy, have now been refuted. Documents have revealed that texts belonging to the *Jābirean Corpus* existed before the third/ninth century date set for them by Kraus, and that some of the earliest Shi‘i sources mention that Jābir was a disciple of Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq.

In any case, we believe that there is no reason to doubt the historical reality of Jābir, the father of Islamic alchemy and one of the most influential figures in Latin alchemy as well. He was probably a Khurāsānī of Arab origin and without doubt associated with the earliest phase of Shi‘ism and especially the period when the early Ismaili movement was born. There are, however, some statements in his corpus that do not accord with certain Ismaili tenets. Interestingly enough, his name also included the epithet al-Šūfī, which indicates his association with very early Sufism. Taking all the historical references as well as the content of his works

into consideration, he must be considered a member of the early Shi'i community immersed particularly in Islamic gnosis (*'irfān*) in which Imam Ja'far, who was also the pole of Sufism in his day, was the undisputed master. In the sciences Jābir probably also drew much from the Ḥarrāneans also known as the Ṣābaeans, who, however, should not be confused with the real Ṣābaeans who still survive in southern Persia and Iraq.

Although we have very little information about the life of Jābir, there is an enormous body of works ascribed to him and known as the *Jābirean Corpus*. Already well known in the fourth/tenth century, this corpus is mentioned by Ibn Nadīm in his *al-Fihrist*. It was studied by Kraus who counted 2,982 works which he sought to classify. The extraordinarily large number of treatises was itself one of the main reasons Kraus advanced to doubt that they could all have been written by a single person. He believed, on the contrary, that they were written by a group of Ismailis over many years. Yet all of the texts within the corpus possess a unity of style and a single philosophy. Seyed Nomanul Haq has shown that they in fact number around 500 rather than 2,982 and that even then many of the titles are but one or two pages long. The *Jābirean Corpus*, therefore, although immense, is not beyond the power of a single individual to compose. It is enough to turn to the literary output of Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī to confirm this fact. Some have even made the far-fetched claim that the 'authors' of the *Jābirean Corpus* were the same Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' or Brethren of Purity who composed the famous *Rasā'il* ('Epistles' or 'Treatises') selections of which are to be found in this volume.

Kraus divided the *Jābirean Corpus* into several collections including the books on practical alchemy following the teachings of ancient alchemists such as Zosimus, Democritus, and Hermes; the books called *kutub al-mawāzīn* (books of balances) dealing with the philosophical foundations of alchemy and the other occult sciences, and the books that investigate more fully certain questions posed in the *Kutub al-mawāzīn*. To these collections must be added smaller ones dealing with philosophy, astronomy/astrology, arithmetic, music, medicine, magic, the religious sciences, and even the generation of living beings.

There are many references in the *Jābirean Corpus* to Ismaili ideas such as the usage of the terms *nāṭiq* (speaking) and *ṣāmit* (silent), degrees of initiation, the significance of the Imam, and the division of the history of the world into seven periods. But as already mentioned there are also points in which these texts do not follow known Ismaili teachings.

It is interesting to note that although alchemy is the application of Hermeticism to a particular realm and has been closely associated with 'Hermetic Philosophy' in both the Islamic world and the West, Jābir, who is the founder of Islamic alchemy and indirectly Latin alchemy, does not usually use the language of Hermeticism. His philosophical perspective and language are more Aristotelian although symbolic while his alchemy is primarily an 'experimental science' based on that

philosophy (if one does not reduce the term experimental simply to the sensuous and empirical). He does not use the arcane language of the alchemist yet succeeds in hiding the teaching as do other alchemists but in a different manner. His recourse is to what is called 'dispersion of knowledge' (*tabdīd al-ʿilm*), which means placing various parts of the exposition of a particular teaching in different works. This method was not unique to Jābir but is to be found in other Islamic figures as well as in other traditions, as one can see in the works of Maimonides and Roger Bacon.

The vast *Jābirean Corpus*, which is indeed encyclopedic and includes even many lost Greek sciences, has been rightly compared in its encyclopedic character to the *Rasāʾil* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. But whereas the *Rasāʾil* are bound together by a Hermetico-Neo-Pythagorean philosophy, the *Jābirean Corpus* is unified by a philosophy drawn from Aristotle as well as Islamic sources and based on the concept of the balance or *mīzān*, which is a Qur'ānic term. Jābir sees everything, not only the physical world but also language, thought, ethics, and the world of the spirit in terms of the *balance* of qualities both inward and outward. Even words are seen by him to be constituted of letters on the basis of the science of 'the balance of letters' (*mīzān al-ḥurūf*). Moreover, he combines this central concern with the balance with numerical symbolism drawn from the traditional Islamic science of numerical symbolism of letters called *al-jafr*, as well as Neo-Pythagorean ideas probably associated with Ḥarrān, which remained a repository of the more esoteric currents of Graeco-Alexandrian thought into the early Islamic period. Altogether it can be said that Jābir is the father of a whole 'philosophy of nature' that was to possess a long life in the annals of Islamic thought.

One cannot be concerned with philosophy in Persia without at least dealing to some extent with Jābir and his works because, although he is studied usually in the context of either the history of science or the history of religion or both, he is also of much philosophical importance. His influence can be seen not only in later Ismaili thought but also in many later religious movements with a philosophical perspective, such as the Nuṭṭawīyān. Also, this archetypal figure has hovered over all those Persian theologians and philosophers of the later centuries who were concerned with alchemy, *jafr*, or the occult sciences in general ranging from Suhrawardī to Mīr Findiriskī to Ḥājj Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī, who died only over a century ago.

In this section, the first part of Jābir ibn Ḥayyān's *Kitāb al-aḥjār* (Book of Stones) has been included. Here, Jābir discusses the symbolism of numbers and its significance in regard to the concept of balance.

## THE BOOK OF STONES

*Kitāb al-aḥjār*

Reprinted from *Names, Natures and Things: The Alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān and his Kitāb al-aḥjār (Book of Stones)*, tr. Seyed Nomanul Ḥaq (Boston, MA, 1994), pp. 163–202.

**The First Part of the Book of Stones According to the Opinion of Balinās**

[1]

*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise be to God for perpetually bestowing upon us His gifts and favours, and for His benevolence. After this follow our prayers for our lord Muḥammad and his family. Peace be upon them!

In several books belonging to the *Books of Balances*, we had promised you an account of the views of Balinās, particularly with regard to the Science of Balance. Accordingly, we now proceed at once with an exposition of those aspects of his doctrine which are in agreement [with our views] and those which are not.

[2]

Balinās said, ‘To expound the wisdom which was dispensed to me after my exit from the cave and taking hold of the Book and the Tablet,<sup>1</sup> I declare:<sup>2</sup> That which belongs in common to all things is the natures. These natures are simple not compound. And if something is common to all things, it would be absurd to suppose

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1. This is one of the several legendary accounts of the discovery of the writings attributed to Hermes. Some accounts, such as that of Abū Ma’shar (d. 273/886), have it that in order to preserve revealed wisdom Hermes had left inscriptions on the walls of temples and caves which were subsequently discovered by sages. Hermes had himself received his knowledge, so a legend goes, from a book written on sapphire tablets delivered to him by an angel. (Cf. David E. Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma’shar*, Leiden, 1968). For a general survey of Arabic Hermetica see M. Plessner, ‘Hermes Trismegistus and Arabic Science’, *Studia Islamica* (1954), 2, 45; A. E. Affifi, ‘The Influence of Hermetic Literature on Muslim Thought’, *BSOAS*, 13 (1951), p. 840; for specific accounts in the Arabic tradition see W. Scott, *Hermetica*, (Oxford, 1936), vol. 4, pp. 248–276; Massignon’s ‘Appendix’ to R. P. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1944).

2. This entire quotation of Jābir (namely, ‘To expound the wisdom ... I declare’), comes practically verbatim from the *Sirr* of Balinās where one reads, ‘*aqūlu ‘alā ithri kitābi hādihā wa aṣifū’l-ḥikmata’l-latī uyyidtu bihā ...*’ (Cf. ‘ps-Apollonius of Tyana’, in U. Weisser, ed., *Kitāb sirr al-khalīqa wa ṣan’at l-ṭabī’a* [Aleppo, 1979], vol. 1, pp. 3–4). Indeed, the legend of the cave in which Hermes revealed his Tablet to Balinās is also found in the *Sirr*.

that it does not possess quantity'. We have already elucidated [all] this in a number of books on this Art.<sup>1</sup>

He went on to say, 'The weights which are common to all animals, plants, and stones conform to the proportion of 17. And as for the elixirs, they are not like this'—<sup>2</sup> again, this is something which we have already explained in several books of ours.

Then Balīnās determined the quantities of these weights; [these quantities are] in accordance with what we have already set forth in the *Book of Morphology*, namely: 1 in the First [Degree of intensity], 3 in the Second, 5 in the Third, and 8 in the Fourth.

[3]

Balīnās said, 'As for the effective weight [of the natures],<sup>3</sup> I believe that its lower limit is the '*ashīr*', that is,  $\frac{3}{4}$  *ḥabba*'. By this he means that the fifth [in the First Degree of intensity] has the value of 1 '*ashīr*'. Then he arrived at the necessary conclusion that the fourth is 1 *dirham* [*dir.*], the third 60 *dir.*, and the second 3,600 [= 60<sup>2</sup>] *dir.*; the minute is the product of 3,600 and 60, so that it becomes 216,000 [= 60<sup>3</sup>] *dir.*

The grade is the product of 216,000 and 60, thus it is 12,960,000 [= 60<sup>4</sup>] *dir.*; and [finally], the degree is the product of 12,960,000 and 60, so that the degree in the First Degree<sup>2</sup> [of intensity] of any nature is 777,600,000 [= 60<sup>5</sup>] *dir.*

Likewise, [the degree in] the Second Degree [of intensity] is 2,332,800,000 [= 3 × 60<sup>5</sup>] *dir.*, the grade in the Second Degree is 38,880,000 [= 3 × 60<sup>4</sup>] *dir.*, the minute in the Second Degree is 648,000 [= 3 × 60<sup>3</sup>] *dir.*, the second in the Second Degree is 10,800 [= 3 × 60<sup>2</sup>] *dir.*, the third in the Second Degree is 180 [= 360] *dir.*, the fourth in the Second Degree is 3 *dir.*, and [finally], the fifth in the Second Degree is 2½ *ḥabbas*, that is, 3 [=  $\frac{3}{4} \times 3$ ] '*ashīrs* ...

To continue the fifth in the Third Degree is, according to the doctrine of Balīnās, 15/4 [= 5 ×  $\frac{3}{4}$ ] *ḥabbas*, or 5 '*ashīrs*'; the fourth in this Degree is 5 [= 5 × 1] *dir.*, the third 300 [= 5 × 60] *dir.*, the second 18,000 [= 5 × 60<sup>2</sup>] *dir.*, and the minute 1,080,000 [= 5 × 60<sup>3</sup>] *dir.* The grade in this [Degree] is 64,800,000 [= 5 × 60<sup>4</sup>], and, following this pattern ... , the degree in the third Degree is 3,888,000,000 [= 5 × 60<sup>5</sup>] *dir.*

1. The Art = alchemy

2. In other words, elixirs vary according to the objects to which they are applied (see below).

3. *Sanja* is the term used for standard weights used as counterpoise in balances. Thus, '*al-wazn bi'l-sanja*' would mean the measured weight, or the effective weight.

4. It should be noted that Jābir uses the term 'degree' in two different senses: (i) in the Galenic sense of *taxeis*, and (ii) as the largest subdivision of (i) which latter seems to have been borrowed from astronomy. To distinguish the two, the 'd' in (i) has been capitalized, thus 'the degree in the First Degree, the degree in the Second Degree', etc.

Similarly, the fifth in the Fourth Degree is 8 'ashīrs or 6 [=  $8 \times \frac{3}{4}$ ] *habbas*, the fourth 8 [=  $8 \times 1$ ] *dir.*, the third 480 [=  $8 \times 60$ ] *dir.*, and the second 28,800 [=  $8 \times 60^2$ ] *dir.* The minute in the Fourth Degree is 1,728,000 [=  $8 \times 60^3$ ] *dir.*; the grade in this Degree is 103,680,000 [=  $8 \times 60^4$ ] *dir.*, and [finally], the degree in the Fourth Degree is 6,220,800,000 [=  $8 \times 60^5$ ] *dir.*

So God protect you, certain ideas of Balīnās have been sufficiently elucidated. Let us now work out how, according to his views, these weights are applied to all things.

## [4]

Balīnās claimed that animals, plants and stones each possess a characteristic Balance which was created in the First Generation by God, may He be glorified and exalted. Further, he said that animals have a Balance besides the First, and likewise [plants] and stones; and that the generation of this Second Balance depends on us. So know that!

He also claimed that the Supreme Elixir in particular has a Balance of its own... . And as for theurgical works, he believed that they possess different Balances according to their characteristic diversity. Then, in broad outline, Balīnās specified each of these Balances which we shall thoroughly explicate in the course of these four books as we have repeatedly promised elsewhere. Also, we shall establish our objectives concerning those Balances which we have ourselves discovered.

You ought to know that anyone who has not read our prior writings on the subject of Balances will derive from the present four books no benefit at all, for all these are intimately interdependent. However, we now proceed with our explication as we have promised you, God the Most High willing!

## [5]

Know, may God protect you, that after attributing a Balance to all things we have enumerated, and after having spoken of the quantitative values which we have mentioned, Balīnās also made a pronouncement on the letters which is in conformity with what we have [ourselves] taught you in the *Book of the Result*.

Next, he said, 'When two letters of identical appearance follow each other in one word, only the first is taken into account considering its type and the value characteristic of its Degree. To the second is ascribed a minimal value which does not enter into the computation made with the letters of the alphabet. An example is ' ' ' or ' b b ' By God the Great, this I have already taught you in the *Book of the Arena of the Intellect*.

After that, he said, 'Let us consider the Arabic language in particular. For it is obvious that the practitioner of Balance need take into account no other language.'



Then Balīnās said, ‘As for the First Balance of animals [etc., etc.]’—here I need not repeat [his words], for what he said is in accordance with, and nothing other than, what I have myself set forth in the *Book of Morphology*.<sup>1</sup> The same applies to [his assertions concerning the First Balance of] plants and stones. So we are done with it, and there is neither obscurity nor doubt in it, nor do we present to you a confused account. And [yet], as always, we deliberately abrogate in one book what we say in another. The purpose is to baffle and lead into error everyone except those whom God loves and provides for!

With regard to [the weights governed by] the Second Balance of animals, plants and stones, they range—as we have said in the beginning of this book—from [the maximum to the minimum, that is from] 1 ‘*ashīr* in the fifth [in the First Degree], and this is the minimum value, to the [degree in the] Fourth Degree which is of the value 6,220,800,000 *dir.*, [this being the maximum]...<sup>2</sup>

[6]

The reason why we are furnishing an account of stones in these [four] books, setting these books apart from all other writings, is that Balīnās said, and it is the truth, that among the letters which occur in drugs and in other things belonging to the three kingdoms of nature, there are those which signify the internal [natures], but not the ones which are external; those which do the opposite, in that they signify the external [natures], but not the internal; those in which all of them [sc. internal as well as external] are found; and those which signify [not only] all that is in the thing, [but also] the excesses which need to be discarded and thrown away—just as one needs to augment and complete what is deficient...<sup>3</sup>

Further, Balīnās believed that the name of gold truly conforms to the Balance, for it signifies two natures. Nay, the correct judgment in this case is that the name of gold is that which is necessitated by all [four of] its natures. ...<sup>4</sup>

Balīnās continued, ‘I only say that all things ought to be named according to the reality of their Balance, with a view to practical applications, not verbal usage. And, may God protect you, it behooves you to know that whoever in this world discovers a new language, he is a great man!’—what Balīnās is here referring to here is the bringing forth of another language of which mankind in general does

1. The text vol. 4, pp. 8–9 is somewhat ambiguous due to the author’s broken style.

2. See the table in [3] above.

3. If the weights of the natures in a thing did not conform to the proportion 1:3:5:8, one had to discover it by intuition: thus, if these weights fell short, one made additions; if the weights were in excess, then, again by means of intuition, ‘separations’ had to be carried out.

4. This is strange, for ‘*dhahab*’ has only three letters: how can it signify four natures? One notes also that our author himself does not seem to agree with the view that the nature of gold ‘truly conforms to the Balance’, for a little later we are told that gold is ‘excessive’ (see [26] below).

not know, for precise application of names is not a matter of common knowledge. Such knowledge is found only in exceedingly rare cases.

In order to discover the natures by means of letters, you ought to follow what we taught you in the *Book of the Elite*, so that we lead you at the initial stages not into the precise determination of things, but into their nature. And this is also what we taught you in the *Book of the Result*, except that, for the purposes of learning, the *Result* is better than the *Elite*. This is so because the *Elite* is like the aroma which emanates from things, whereas the *Result* is like their essence: the absence of the latter is the absence of the source.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, these accounts make it known that the extraction of the mere external nature of an object is of no use—if we do this, we have practically let the thing slip away from our hands. Rather, you must, may God protect you, weigh everything whose weight you desire and attain it, away from everything else,<sup>2</sup> in the interior of the thing, and in its exterior.

As for the different ways of the removal of excesses, you need at this point what is set forth in the *Book of Morphology* and elsewhere in these [four] books, namely that you must necessarily remove from all things whose weight you desire what is added to their primitive structure, and what has entered into this structure due to reasons other than additions.<sup>3</sup> It is known that the [word which denotes the] name of gold, (*al-*) *Dh<sup>a</sup>H<sup>a</sup>B*, exists in its primitive form, since it is free from additions; the spelling of the [word which names] silver, *fid<sup>da</sup>*, becomes *FD*, since the *hā'* enters in it for the sake of feminine designation, and it does not admit of masculine gender. Thus, after removing the additions from the name of silver, you ought to augment it according to the need.

So know, O brother, that when you obtain only one letter, like ‘ ’ or ‘b’ or whatever else you obtain, you must make the total conform to 17 ... , but with one proviso: you ought to separate the result obtained through the analysis of letters from that obtained by means of intuition. You try to work out the latter in relation to the form,<sup>4</sup> so that the two figures form one unique figure. By my Master! I have already explained to you that which you need not augment. In it there is a third thing—but I am not happy with it unless you make in one day one thousand animals, one thousand plants, and one thousand stones.<sup>5</sup> God is our Guide, may His blessings be upon you. Indeed, He is Generous and Kind.

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1. Note the eulogy here.

2. It is not clear what the author means by ‘away from everything else’.

3. Jābir very likely means inflections, feminine designations and plural forms.

4. Form = 17 (see [13] below).

5. Indeed, through the method of artificial generation, the adept could accomplish this (see [4] above).

[7]

[A]

My brother! You ought to know that additions to the primitive root of a word may be in the form of prefixes, suffixes or infixes. You ought to know, further, that some of these additions are represented by inflexions, and should therefore be discarded and disregarded: for example,  $Z^aYD^{un}$ ,  $Z^aYD^{an}$  and  $Z^aYD^{in}$ , [which are the inflected forms of the primitive noun  $Z^aYD$ ] in the nominative, accusative and genitive cases [respectively];<sup>1</sup> and  $Z^aYD^{an}$  and  $Z^aYD^{un}$  in the dual and the plural forms. So, my brother, pay no attention to this, and restore the word to its singular core, such as  $Z^aYD$  from  $Z^aYD^{ayn}$ , and  $UM^aR^{ayn}$ , and so on.

[B]

It behooves you to know that some letters are such that if they appear at the beginning of the word, they are additions to the primitive root, while these same letters function as radicals when they occur in the middle of the word or at its end. On the contrary, the final letter of a word may be an addition to the root, whereas this same letter, when it is medial or initial in a word, may be a radical. I mean an essential part of the primitive core. Similarly, a medial letter may be a radical, while as an initial or final letter it may either be an adjunct or a radical.

You ought to know that there are ten letters which function as adjuncts and these are: *hamza*, *lām*, *yā'*, *wāw*, *mīm*, *tā'*, *nūn*, *sīn*, *alif*, and *hā'*. But, then, these letters keep changing their places of occurrence and their positions in words, whence we need to establish morphological paradigms which govern these changes.

[C]

So, seeking assistance from God, may He be exalted and glorified, we proceed: The basic units of speech consist in three structures, namely: trilateral, quadrilateral, and quinqueliteral. As for the trilateral, they are divided into twelve paradigms. Out of these, ten are in use; while one is the basis only for one word, and one exists only in theory, nothing is ever built on it, and it is practically nonexistent.

Concerning these paradigms, one of them is  $FA'L$ , exemplified in *fahd*, and [nine others are these]:  $FI'L$ , such as *himl*;  $FU'UL$ , such as *dubur*;  $FU'L$ , such as *'unq*;  $FA'AL$ , such as *rasan*;  $FI'IL$ , such as *ibil*;  $FU'AL$ , such as *ṣurad*;  $FI'AL$ , such as *qima'*;  $FA'IL$ , such as *kābid*; and  $FA'UL$ , such as *sabu'*. So these are ten paradigms into which the trilateral structure multiples. As for the paradigm which generates only a unique example, it is  $FU'IL$ : the insect *duwaybba* is called *'du'il*. Finally, the structure on which nothing could possibly be based is  $FI'UL$ .

1. Jābir specifies two terms for the genitive case, *khafḍ* and *jarr*. This betrays a terminological eclecticism, for the former term was used by the grammarians of Baghdad, the latter by those of Kūfa.

As for the quadriliteral structure, it has five morphological paradigms, namely: FA'LAL, such as 'aqrab; FU'LUL, such as *burqu'*; FI'LIL, such as *zibrij*; FI'LAL, such as *hijra'*; and FI'ALL, such as *qimaṭr*.

The quinqueliteral is divided into four paradigms, and they exist in accordance with: FA'ALLAL, such as *safarjal*; FA'LALIL, such as *jaḥmarish*; FU'ALLAL, [such as ... ?; and FI'LALL] such as *jirdaḥl*.

[D]

All else is nothing but adjuncts to the primary core. As for the recognition of the additions so that everything is restored to its true structure, there are, as we have mentioned above, ten [letters which function as] adjuncts. Among these, *mīm* and *lām* are specific to nouns: *lām* is accompanied by *alif*, and [the addition of] these two are meant for definition, as in *AL-'abd*, *AL-ghulām*, *AL-dawā'*, and the like. And all nouns admit of a gender. The letter *lām* is added also between *alif* and *kāf* in order to specify the grammatical third person alluded to,<sup>1</sup> although it is more appropriate with the *hamza*.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, [a third] *lām* is added between the second *lām* and *dhāl* in *alladhī*.<sup>3</sup> This is done in order that it [sc. the third *lām*] can carry the a-vowel and that a distance is introduced between the vowelessness of the [second] *lām* and the i-vowel of the *dhāl*. As for *mīm*, it is added in [such nouns as] *makrum* and *mustaḍrab* and in others like these. This letter is not endowed to verbs except very rarely, such as [its occurrence in] the verb *makhraqa*.

With regard to *hamza*, *wāw*, *yā'*, *tā'*, *nūn*, *sīn*, *alif*, and *hā'*, *hamza* is added in *Aḥmad* and in *Afḍal*, [these two] being nouns; and in *aḥsana*, and in *akrama*, and these two are verbs. To be sure, our purpose is not to teach you grammar. In fact, we are showing you all this only because in [the appellations applied to] stones, plants and animals, [some have the form of a primitive noun], others have the form of a verbal noun. Thus, we show you those letters which occur [a] as additions to [the primitive root] of verbs, as well as to [the primitive core] of nouns; or [b] as additions to nouns, but as radicals of verbs; or [c] as primary elements of nouns, but as additions to verbs. We do so in order that you apply these rules to all things in general, God willing!

The letter *yā'* is added in the word *ya'malu*, and this is a noun, and in *yaḍribu*, and this is a verb. *Wāw* is added in *jawhar<sup>un</sup>*, and this is a noun, and in *ḥawqala*, and this is a verb. The letter *tā'* is added in the word *tanḍubu*, this being a noun, and in *taḍribu* which is a verb. [Similarly], *nūn* is added in *narjis<sup>un</sup>*, and this is a noun; and in *naḍribu* which is a verb.

1. Indeed, *lām* is added in '*dhāka*' so that it becomes '*dhālika*'.

2. This is not clear.

3. The case Jābir has in mind is that of the relative pronoun for the dual, e.g., *alladhāni* (masc. nom.) and *alladhayni* (masc. acc. and gen.)—these words are, indeed, spelled with three *lāms*, and the same applies to the feminine forms.

The letter *sīn* is added in *mustaḍrab<sup>un</sup>* which is a noun; and in *istaḍraba*, and this is a verb. The letter *alif* is added in *muḍārib<sup>un</sup>* which is a noun, and in the word *ḍaraba* which is a verb. [Finally], *hā'* is added in *qā'imat<sup>un</sup>*, and this is for feminine designation—thus, [in the apocopate form], the word is [pronounced] *qā'ima*. *Hā'* is added also in *irmih*, and this is for [phonetic] pause. So know [these rules], and apply them in dealing with all such paradigms you come across...

## [8]

When we say that rhythm is defined as a numerical composition, then [we explain it by saying that] this composition exists by virtue of [sequences of] motion and rest. And as for the moving and quiescent [letters] when they are composed in speech or in rhythm, the maximum number of moving letters that can cluster in a row is four—metricians exemplify it by the paradigm, *FA'ALATUN*. The maximum number of quiescent letters that can cluster in a row is [two], represented by their paradigm *FA'ILAN*—here the letter *alif* and the letter *nūn* are quiescent. This [latter] would have been impossible were it not for the softness which is in *alif*. Such clustering of quiescent letters is inadmissible except in the case of soft letters, and these are three: *wāw*, *yā'*, and *alif*. So know that!<sup>1</sup>

Since, in speech and hearing, numerical composition [= rhythm] is based solely on motion and rest, the total number of metrical feet is eight; two of them are quinary, the remaining six septenary. As for the quinary, they are *FA'ULUN* and *FA'ILUN*. And as for the six septenary ones, they are *MAFA'ILUN*, *FA'ILATUN*, *MUSTAF'ILUN*, *MUTAF'ILUN*, *MUFA'ALATUN*, and *MAF'ÜLATUN*. Then, from these, practically unlimited numbers of feet are generated through additions and subtractions. So it is their doctrine concerning the definition of rhythm, namely that it is governed by numbers, which has yielded all these elaborations.

## [9]

Here we need something else, for rhythm, when viewed in terms of numbers, may either be odd or even. Now, even and odd numbers are of different types: even-even, even-odd, odd-odd, or odd-even. Odd numbers are 1 and its sisters;<sup>2</sup> even numbers

1. For an extensive study of Arabic phonetics see M. Bravmann, *Materialien und Untersuchungen zu den phonetischen Lehren der Araber* (Göttingen, 1934). An excellent brief account is to be found in Fleisch s.v. 'Huruf al-Hidjā', *EL2*, vol. 3, p. 596 ff.

2. Jābir defines odd numbers before defining even numbers. This reverses the order one finds in Euclid's *Elements* (Def. 7 and 8, Euclid, *Elements*, tr. T. L. Heath as *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements* [New York, 1956], vol. 2, p. 277). In fact it was a logical necessity for Euclid to define even numbers first, since he defines odd numbers in terms of even numbers. As for the rest of the definitions, Jābir follows the order of Euclid.

But perhaps the most significant feature of this definition of Jābir is his use of the term '*wāḥid*'

are 2 and its sisters.<sup>1</sup> The even-even number is like 8: it arises out of the pairing of 6, of 4, and of 2.<sup>2</sup> As for the even-odd numbers, they are [the even numbers] like 6 which is contained in [an odd number] 9; and the sisters of 6, like [the even number] 4 contained in [the odd number] 5, and so on.<sup>3</sup> As for the odd-odd, it is the number 1 contained in 3, 5, 7, 9, and in numbers like these.<sup>4</sup> The odd-even numbers are the opposite of the even-odd: they are [the odd numbers contained in even numbers], such as the numbers 7, 5, 3, and 1 which are contained in the even number 8.<sup>5</sup>

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for unit, rather than 'waḥda', for this is one of the identifying traits of the Arabic Euclid tradition which derives from, *inter alia*, the Ḥajjāj text. See G. R. de Young, *The Arithmetic Books of Euclid's Elements*, Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University (1981), pp. 565–567. According to De Young the difference between the two terms hinges on whether the unit is considered odd or not. As we can see, Jābir does, indeed, consider the unit to be an odd number. Thus, we can legitimately place him in a pre-Ishāq-Thābit environment.

1. One would have thought that by 'sisters' Jābir means 'multiples', but, then, he used the same word in his definition of odd numbers where it had a different sense! This definition, like his first one, is totally dissimilar to what one reads in Euclid (Heath tr., loc. cit.).

2. Euclid's definition reads: An even-times even number is that which is measured by an even number according to an even number' (Heath tr., loc. cit.). Jābir's example of 8 certainly satisfies this definition, for  $8 = 2 \times 4$ , or  $4 \times 2$ . But, then, to say that it arises also out of a pairing of 6 is to violate Euclid's definition.

Therefore it seems that Jābir views an even-even number as that which arises when an even number pairs with itself, or with another even number. Thus,  $8 = 4 + 4$ ,  $6 + 2$ ,  $2 + 2 + 2 + 2$  (double pairing). Obviously this is a worthless concept, for all even numbers except 2 satisfy this definition. (It is now clear why it is not appropriate to translate Jābir's 'zawj al-zawj' as 'even-times even', unlike the case with Euclid).

3. Jābir's example of 6 will certainly satisfy Euclid's Def. 9, namely, 'an even-times odd number is that which is measured by an even number according to an odd number' (Heath tr., p. 278). For  $6 = 2 \times 3$ , and (given that the unit is considered an odd number by our author) also  $6 \times 1$ . However, it is not clear what Jābir means when he says that '6 is contained in 9', etc. Jābir's example of 6 will certainly satisfy Euclid's Def. 9, namely, 'an even-times odd number is that which is measured by an even number according to an odd number' (Heath tr., p. 278). For  $6 = 2 \times 3$ , and (given that the unit is considered an odd number by our author) also  $6 \times 1$ . However, it is not clear what Jābir means when he says that '6 is contained in 9', etc.

4. According to Euclid, 'an odd-times odd number is that which is measured by an odd number according to an odd number' (Heath tr., loc. cit.). Jābir's examples all satisfy this definition, since

$$3 = 1 \times 3$$

$$5 = 1 \times 5$$

$$7 = 1 \times 7$$

$$9 = 1 \times 9, 3 \times 3.$$

But, assuming that our translation is accurate, what he does mean by saying that it is 'the number 1 contained in 3, 5, 7, 9, and in numbers like these?' If he did not have 9 in his list, one would clearly see that he is talking about prime numbers.

5. Odd-even (or rather, 'odd-times even') numbers are not mentioned in Nicomachus' Introduction (and hence not in the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān), nor are they found in all MSS of the Elements. Heath tells us (op. cit., p. 283) that in the manuscript in which such numbers are introduced, they are stated to be the ones which, when divided by an odd number, give an even number as a quotient. This would mean that any 'even-times odd' number is also 'odd-times even'

[10]

From all this arise the four musical modes,<sup>1</sup> being the final result of all the above numerical considerations, namely: the [rhythmic] modes called the ‘first heavy’,<sup>2</sup> the ‘second heavy’,<sup>3</sup> the *ramal*,<sup>4</sup> and the *hazaj*.<sup>5</sup> Then, from each of these, four light modes are generated, giving altogether eight [rhythmic] modes. These latter are the ‘first light heavy’,<sup>6</sup> the ‘second light heavy’,<sup>7</sup> the rapid *ramal*,<sup>8</sup> and the rapid *hazaj*.<sup>9</sup> Finally, a

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number, since  $6 = 2 \times 3 = 3 \times 2$ , making the definition superfluous. Thus Heath considers this to be an interpolation.

Jābir’s definition is obscure. He gives as examples, 7, 5, 3 and 1: is he talking about prime numbers?

1. Here Jābir is talking about rhythmic modes.
2. One of the ‘famous rhythmic modes’ (*al-iqā’āt al-mashhūrah*) which are described, among others, by al-Fārābī in his *Kitāb al-mūsīqā al-kabīr* (tr. Baron Rodolphe d’Erlanger as *La musique arabe* [Paris, 1967]), vol. 2., p. 1022 ff. According to the classical accounts, the ‘first heavy’ has three long percussions, sometimes equal in duration, but more often the third one being longer than the other two, e.g. 4 beat - 4 beat - 8 beat cycle in al-Fārābī [1967], p. 1045 ff. See Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms* (Westport, CN, 1981), p. 369.
3. According to al-Fārābī (*Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, pp. 1038–1041), it had three slow percussions, forming an arithmetic progression: 4 - 6 - 8.
4. The invention of this mode is credited to Ibn Muḥriz (al-Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, p. 276). Al-Fārābī tells us that it consisted of a three-percussion cycle beginning with one long percussion, followed by two short ones ([1967], pp. 1033–1037). Similar descriptions are found in al-Kindī and Ibn Sīnā (al-Faruqi, loc. cit.). *Ramal* is also a poetic meter.
5. *Hazaj* is a pre-Islamic Arabic term applied to one of the three kinds of singing in ancient Arabia. See Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi (d. 329/940), *al-Iqd al-farīd* (Cairo, 1887), p. 186; H. J. Farmer, ‘Music: The Priceless Jewel’, *JRAS* (1941), p. 25. But the term also designates a conjunct rhythmic mode of moderate tempo, i.e., one in which all percussions are of equal duration and follow one another at regular intervals. According to Ibn Sīnā, *hazaj* designates any conjunct (*muttaṣil*) rhythmic mode (*Kitāb al-naḥāt*, ed. al-Ḥanafī [1930], p. 92). But al-Fārābī restricts the application of this term only to the conjunct (*mutawāṣil*) modes of moderate tempo (*Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 453). Like *ramal*, *hazaj* is also a poetic meter. Lois al-Faruqi adds that *hazaj* ‘was thought to have been the first rhythmic mode introduced in the new genre of song of the [1st/]7th century known as *ghinā’ al-mutqan*’. (*An Annotated Glossary*, p. 94).
6. A three percussion cycle, two short followed by one longer (O.O.O... : 2 - 2 - 4). (See al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 1048).
7. This rhythmic mode is described by al-Fārābī as a fast version of *thaqīl al-thānī* (O.O.O... : 1 - 2 - 3) (al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 1042 ff. Cf. H. J. Farmer, *Sa’adyah Gaon on the Influence of Music* [London, 1943], p. 82).
8. The ‘rapid *ramal*’ is described variously by authorities. Thus al-Kindī says that it designates a rhythmic mode of either two or three percussions (O.O... : 1 - 2 or O.O.O... : 1 - 1 - 1) (see Farmer [1943], p. 85). But according to al-Fārābī, the term was used for a rhythmic mode with two percussions, the first short, the second long (O.O... : 2 - 8) (al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 1029; p. 1033). In contrast, Ibn Sīnā tells us that it is made of three percussions of two different lengths (O.O.O... : 2 - 1 - 2) (Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-shifā’*, tr. Baron Rodolphe d’Erlanger [Paris, 1935], p. 209). Cf. al-Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, pp. 134–135.
9. A conjunct rhythmic mode comprising a sequence of equal percussions performed at a tempo which allows only one percussion to be fitted between any two percussions (al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 451. See al-Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, p. 143).

relationship is established between each one of these and [the melodic modes called] the *aṣābi*.<sup>1</sup> The variations in these [melodic] modes, which are produced by fingers, bear a parallel in the variations produced [in speech] by the throat, tongue, and lips, for just as these *aṣābi* give rise to motion and rest, we obtain motion and rest in letters too.<sup>2</sup> So they call [these combined modes]: the ‘first heavy freed’,<sup>3</sup> the ‘first heavy tightened’,<sup>4</sup> the ‘first heavy middle’,<sup>5</sup> and the ‘first heavy carried’<sup>6</sup> (while this ‘carried’ is also called ‘restricted’, perhaps the two [are not quite the same but] separated by a short percussion). In this way, each of the eight [rhythmic modes] is combined with each of the four [melodic modes], and this makes a total of 32 modes.

All this is yielded by their doctrine that [music is] governed by numbers, that is, it is a composition of numbers...

[11]

*Concerning the Balances of those bodies which are mixed together:*

[A]

Take, for example, glass<sup>7</sup> mixed with mercury in some proportion of weight known to nobody except you, and you give it to the practitioner of Balance. [You will find that] this expert has the capability of determining for you precisely how much of

1. ‘*Aṣābi*’ literally means ‘fingers’, a term which designates the melodic modes known to have been organized into a system by the late 1st/7th century musician Ibn Misjah (described by Ibn al-Munajjim (d. 300/912) in his *Risāla fi’l-mūsīqā* [1976], pp. 853, 868 ff.). See Lois al Faruqi [1981] p. 20; Farmer [1957], p. 448; Owen Wright, ‘Ibn al-Munajjim and the Early Arabian Modes’, *The Galpin Society Journal* (1966), XIX, 27, p. 41. For Ibn Misjah see above.

These modes are called ‘fingers’ because they are named after the finger or fret position used for producing their starting tones (see notes below). Owen Wright tells us that at one stage these melodic modes were, indeed, allied to rhythmic modes to produce a corpus of 36 *ṭuruq* (*The Modal System of Arab and Persian Music, AD 1250–1300* [Oxford, 1978], pp. 250–251). This essentially verifies Jābir’s claim.

2. See Chapter 3 above (for the phonetic terms ‘motion’ and ‘rest’ see n. 16 of that chapter).

3. *Muṭlaq*, according to al-Fārābī, designates the open string of a chordophone (*Kitāb al-mūsīqā*, p. 500). Jābir mentions it as one of the octave modes which were systematically described by later musical theorists such as ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Ghaybī (d. 839/1435) (al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, p. 216).

4. Again, *maḍmūm* is described by Ibn Ghaybī as one of the six octave modes known collectively as the *aṣābi*’ (al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, p. 180).

5. The term *wuṣṭā* signifies the use of the middle finger for producing the starting tone. (For a detailed account see al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary*, p. 389).

6. *Maḥmūl* is mentioned by Ibn Ghaybī as one of the *aṣābi*’, i.e. one of the six octave modes (Lois al Faruqi [1981], p. 164).

7. It has already been pointed out that in some parts of his corpus, our author includes ‘glass’ in his list of metals. Von Lipmann identifies this substance as yellow amber (see Chapter 1 above).



glass the mixture contains, and how much of mercury. The same is true of mixtures of silver and gold, or of copper and silver, or mixtures of three, four, ten, or even a thousand bodies if such a thing is in practice possible.

So we say: The determination of the quantitative composition of mixed bodies is [carried out by means of] a technique which closely approximates the Balance, and it is a splendid technique! Nay, if you were to say that it serves as a demonstration of the faultlessness of this Science, I mean the Science of Balances, and you would be speaking the truth, for indeed such is the case. Now, if you wish to know this technique and become an expert of Balance yourself so that, when you are given a mixture of bodies and other [solid] substances, you are able to say what substances in what quantities this mixture contains, then in the name of God—

[B]

Make use of a balance constructed in the manner of the diagrams. This balance is set up by means of three strings going upwards [to the steel beam]: attach two scales to these strings in the usual manner of balance construction. I mean by tying the strings and doing whatever else is needed. Ensure that the middle steel carriage which contains the tongue<sup>1</sup> is located with utmost precision at the centre of the beam, so that prior to the tying of the strings the tongue lowers in neither direction even by a single *ḥabba*. Similarly, ensure that the weights of the two scales are equal, that they have equal capacity, and that the quantities of the liquids they hold are likewise equal.

Once you have accomplished all this according to the specified conditions, not much remains to be done. Suspend this balance like ordinary balances. Next, take two vessels with a small depth of the order of a single hand-measure, or less, or more, or however much you wish. Now fill these vessels with water which has already been distilled for several days so that all its impurities and dirt have been removed, the 'container' in which this water is kept should have been washed as thoroughly as one washes drinking cups.<sup>2</sup> Having done this, get hold of an ingot of pure, clean, fine gold weighing 1 *dirham*, and an ingot of white, unadulterated pure silver weighing also 1 *dirham* so that both ingots are equal in weight. Place the gold in one of the scales of the balance, and the silver in the other. Next, immerse the scales in the above-mentioned water until they are totally dipped and submerged.

Now, note the balance: you will find that the scale carrying the gold has lowered as compared to the one carrying the silver, and this is due to the smallness of the volume of gold and the largeness of that of silver. This [relative heaviness of gold] result from nothing but the nature dry which it contains. Finally, using counterpoise

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1. The term 'tongue' designates the needle which functions as the pointer of an equal-arm balance. It is fixed at the centre of gravity of the steel beam and divides it into two equal arms. This tongue moves with respect to a carriage which is attached at right angles to the beam.

2. *bankān* = *finjān*. The word is of Persian origin (see Paul Kraus ed., *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (Essai sur l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam, vol. 1): Textes choisies* [Cairo, 1935], p. 142, n. 12).

finds out the difference of weight between them, and work out that it is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *dānaqs*. Note that when you mix to this weight of pure gold roughly 1 *qīrāt* or 1 *dānaq* of silver the former will drop in weight in the ratio of *ḥabbas* to *qīrāṭs*, since there are 12 *ḥabbas* to each *qīrāt*.<sup>1</sup>

So know this, for it is, by my Master, a fountainhead of the knowledge of philosophers! It is in this manner that you determine each one of any two mixed substances, or of any three, four, or five, or however many you will.

For instance, you familiarize yourself with the ratio that exists between gold and copper, silver and copper, gold and lead, silver and lead, and copper, silver, gold and lead. Likewise, you find out the ratio which exists between gold, silver and copper when they are mixed together or between silver, copper and lead. But you can do this by taking one body at a time or two bodies at a time, or three, or however many you will... .

[12]

We have pointed out to you in several books, if you have read them at all, that if a letter is duplicated in a word, one of them is to be dropped. [Thus], if in some drug a degree of one of the natures is found—be this degree in the First [Degree of intensity], in the Second, in the Third, or in the Fourth—there are in this drug no degrees other than this. And if this degree is in the First [Degree of intensity], then it is the First; if it is in the Second, then it is the Second; if it is in the Third, then it is the Third; if it is in the Fourth, then it is the Fourth. In order that you learn all this, I shall give you several examples of drugs so that you see it for yourself. But such a thing is not admissible in the case of units lower than the degree; I mean grades, minutes, seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths... .

[13]

The form in everything is [the number] 17.

If you find in any animal, plant or stone only 5 [parts], you are left with 12. Now, in the [deficient] drug there will always be only one nature, two natures, or three or [all] four. There is no other [possible outcome of the analysis of letters]. Now, if the drug has only one nature, you distribute the 12 [parts] among the remaining three, and if it [is one of those drugs which] possess two natures, distribute the 12 [parts] among the other two. But if has three natures, compensate for the 12 [missing parts] by means of the one remaining nature, after having deduced that it serves to supply the deficiency of the other natures of the drug.

So know that! ...

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1. Jābir seems to be stating an empirical law that in a silver-gold alloy, the weight of the silver in the alloy: loss of weight of the alloy in water = 1: 1/12.

## The Second Part of the Book of Stones According to the Opinion of Balīnās

[14]

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise be to God Who chose Muḥammad as Prophet and selected ‘Alī as his Trustee. God’s blessings be upon those whom he has chosen, and upon their families. May God grant them salvation!

[15]

Now we turn to our main point.

Prior to this book of ours we have written numerous others on the subject of the Science of Balance, and in each one of these books we have provided a lucid and rigorous explication of the various aspects of this Science. Now, since Balīnās disagreed with us in some fundamental principles as well as in some matters of detail, it would be wrong not to specify these disagreements.

[Among] the matter[s] in which he disagreed with us is the question of the effective weights [of the natures]. We mentioned these weights in the first part of this book. We also promised in several books that we shall present an account of stones, and of the forms which the natures take in the Balance, so that nothing concerning these matters remains hidden from the earnest seeker... .

We have thoroughly explicated to you those letters on which language entirely depends, specifying instances, from degrees to fifths, when these letters are excessive or deficient.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, we have given you an account of the [effective] weights of all letters as we have them and as Balīnās has them. In addition, we have mentioned to you that in the exact sciences, and in dealing with subtle natural processes, we stand in grave need of [a knowledge of] effective Balances as it is expounded by Balīnās, and that our need for this kind of knowledge is not so great when we deal with locomotion of bodies and their decompositions.<sup>2</sup>

[16]

As for us, we say: Animals have a Balance to which we assign a weight of 10 *dirhams* in the First Degree [of intensity]. For the higher Degrees we increase this value, just as for the subdivisions of a Degree we decrease it. Next, we assign to plants a weight of 7 *dirhams* [in the corresponding Degree], and, again, increase it for the higher Degrees and give smaller values to the subdivisions. [Finally], to stones we

1. That is, when the weights they signify do not exactly add up to 17 or its multiple.

2. It is not altogether clear what, in this context, the author means by decomposition of bodies.

assign a [corresponding] weight of 5 *dirhams*, increasing it for the higher Degrees and decreasing it for the subdivisions according to the need. This is our view and belief concerning the manifest aspects of the Art. It does not violate the principles of true judgment, like the work of Balīnās.

As for Balīnās, he made the governing rules identical for all three kingdoms of nature and invoked the authority of Socrates in support, saying, 'If all three kingdoms of nature arise out of the natures, then it is clear that, consequently, there is no difference between them with respect to Balance—these are the words of Socrates.' So Balīnās assigned a weight of 777, 600, 000 *dirhams*<sup>1</sup> to [the degree in] the First Degree [of intensity]. And since this man, I mean Balīnās, needed the fifth as the [smallest] subdivision [of a Degree], he assigned to it a weight of 1 '*ashīr*'.<sup>2</sup> He then increased this weight [for the] higher [subdivisions] till it reached where it reached. These quantities have been specified in our account of Balīnās in the first part of this book... .

[17]

Now listen to what Socrates had to say! ...

He said: 'We make [the degree in] the First Degree [of intensity] 1 *dirham* and 1 *dānaq*, [in] the Second Degree 3½ *dirhams*, [in] the Third 5 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs*,<sup>3</sup> and [in] the Fourth 9 *dirhams* and 2 *dānaqs*. We make the grade in the First Degree [of intensity] ½ *dirham*, in the Second Degree 1½ *dirhams*, in the Third 2½ *dirhams*, and in the Fourth 4 *dirhams*.

'We make the minute in the First Degree [of intensity] 2½ *dānaqs*, in the Second Degree 1¼ *dirhams*, in the Third 2 *dirhams* and 1 *qīrāt*, and in the Fourth 3⅓ *dirham*. We make the second in the First Degree 2 *dānaqs*, in the Second 1 *dirham*, in the Third 1 *dirham* and 4 *dānaqs*, and in the Fourth 2 *dirhams* and 4 *dānaqs*.

'We make the third in the First Degree 1½ *dānaqs*, in the Second 4½ *dānaqs*, in the Third 1¼ *dirhams*, and in the Fourth 2 *dirhams*. We make the fourth in the First Degree 1 *dānaq*, in the Second ½ *dirham*, in the Third 5 *dānaqs*, and in the Fourth 1 *dirham* and 2 *dānaqs*. Finally, we make the fifth in the First Degree 1 *qīrāt*, in the Second 1½ *dānaqs*, in the Third 2½ *dānaqs*, and in the Fourth 4 *dānaqs*.'

1. One notes that all three manuscripts contain a numerical error here. But more surprising is the fact that Kraus too reproduces this mistake in his text (Kraus, ed., *Jābir ibn Hayyān*, 159:12–13). See critical notes to Edited Text, 15:8–9 above where this error has been specified. Indeed, according to [3] above, the weight of the degree in the First Degree of intensity is 777, 600, 000 *dirhams*.

2. See [3] above.

3. Again, all three manuscripts, as well as the text of Kraus ed., *Jābir ibn Hayyān*, 160:7, contain an error. See critical notes to Edited Text, 15:14.

[18]

May God protect you, just look at the erudition of this man, his stature in science, and the quality of his judgments! Note, likewise, that he discarded the sexagesimal system [adopted by Balīnās], and the reason for this is his view that it is only a convention to say that one degree equals 60 grades, [and one grade equals 60 minutes, and one minute equals 60 seconds, etc.]. And if we had wanted to place one or more steps higher everything that is above a given thing, or if we had wanted to place likewise everything that is below a given thing, then we would have been in no other position than to adopt the sexagesimal system.<sup>1</sup> But the sexagesimal system is used only because it makes calculations easy and gives rise to fewer fractions...

We have already presented above an illustrative model of the weights [which follow a sexagesimal geometric progression], a model according to which all concrete cases are worked out. In this book of mine, however, I shall set forth the pattern of weights according to the doctrine of Socrates as we have reported it. Now if you wish to follow the doctrine of Socrates, go ahead, and if you wish to follow the ideas of Balīnās, do so, for both of them are the same. But if you wish to follow our opinion, then follow us. Our opinion is different from both of them, for it is a closer approximation [of the truth].

[19]

	Ist Deg.	IIInd Deg.	IIIrd Deg.	IVth Deg.	Hot	Cold	Dry	Moist
	1 <i>dān.</i>	: 3 <i>dān.</i>	: 5 <i>dān.</i>	: 8 <i>dān.</i>				
Degree	7	21	35	56	<i>alif</i>	<i>bā'</i>	<i>jīm</i>	<i>dāl</i>
Grade	3	9	15	24	<i>hā'</i>	<i>wāw</i>	<i>zā'</i>	<i>hā'</i>
Minute	2½	7½	12½	20	<i>tā'</i>	<i>yā'</i>	<i>kāf</i>	<i>lām</i>
Second	2	6	10	16	<i>mīm</i>	<i>nūn</i>	<i>sīn</i>	<i>ʿayn</i>
Third	1½	4½	7½	12	<i>fā'</i>	<i>ṣād</i>	<i>qāf</i>	<i>rā'</i>
Fourth	1	3	5	8	<i>shīn</i>	<i>tā'</i>	<i>thā'</i>	<i>khā'</i>
Fifth	0½	1½	2½	4	<i>dhāl</i>	<i>ḍād</i>	<i>ẓā'</i>	<i>ghayn</i>

1. In this paragraph, Jābir's expressions are exceedingly convoluted. Evidently, all he intends to say is that in developing a system of units, one has no choice but to adopt a sexagesimal progression. The reason? He explains immediately below that the sexagesimal system simplifies calculations.

[20]

At this point we need to show you by means of tables the Balances of fusible stones.<sup>1</sup> These fusible stones which constitute the first and foremost need of the Art are gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin. [We are presenting these illustrations] so that you learn the reality of the letters [occurring in the names] of all these bodies. So you ought to know first that all of these stones have 17 powers. Now, these stones are either red or white. If they are white, they possess hot in the First Degree [of intensity]. They possess 3 times as much cold, 5 times as much dry, and 8 times as much moist.<sup>2</sup>

It is the opposite if they are red, possessing cold in the First Degree [of intensity], with 3 times as much hot, 8 times as much dry, and 5 times as much moist.

[21]

The quantitative magnitudes obtained (in the present context, these are the measured weights. I mean those which make up the total of 17.

In the First Degree [of intensity] exists either hot or cold (and these two are [signified by] the letters *alif* or *bā'*) weighing 1 *dirham* and 1 *dānaq*, as we have already said at the very outset. Now, 3 times the value of the First Degree (and here we reach the Second degree which is likewise signified by *alif* or *bā'*) is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  *dirhams*. [This can be viewed] either as 3 times the value of the First Degree or as the value of the Second Degree in its own right. Thus, the total weight of the two active natures is [ $\{1 \text{ dir.} = 1 \text{ dān.}\} = \{3\frac{1}{2} \text{ dir.} = 3 \text{ dir.} = 3 \text{ dān.}\} =$ ] 4 *dirhams* and 4 *dānaqs*.

The eight-time weight of dry or moist [in the Fourth Degree], being [signified by] the letters *jīm* or *dāl* respectively, is 9 *dirhams* and 2 *dānaqs*. [This can be viewed] either as 8 times the value of the First Degree or as an independent value of the Fourth Degree itself. As for the five-time weight of dry or moist [in the Third Degree], and these are likewise [signified by] the letters *jīm* or *dāl* respectively, it is 5 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs*. [Again, this can be viewed] either as 5 times the value of the First Degree or as an independent value of the Third Degree itself ...

In this way, among all objects belonging the three kingdoms of nature, from the smallest to the largest, when these are considered according to the precise Balance, and among all the celestial bodies and among all the other wonders of the natural world, the total weight of 17 in red [bodies] is [represented by] 19 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs* [=  $17 \times 7 \text{ dān.}$ ]. This is the figure arrived at according to the precise Balance as it exists in incorporeal objects, in the material objects belonging to the three kingdoms of nature, and in the higher bodies. Similar is the case with white [bodies]. It behooves you to know this!

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1. He does give the tables at the end of this second part of his book.

2. Note that throughout Jābir makes the natures conform to the proportion 1 : 3 : 5 : 8.

As for the difference between the white and the red, it lies in the excess of cold and shortage of hot in the white, the case of the red being the opposite; and in the excess of dry and shortage of moist in the red, the case of the white being the opposite. So understand that!

When you desire the weight of a given thing, you ought to find out, [first], what its letters necessitate; next, work out what it adds up to. [Finally], adjust your result so that it reaches a value which is related to 17.<sup>1</sup>

[22]

When in a natural object the nature hot is on the opposite side of moist, then we have an instance of the colour red. Had this not been the case, the dry due to its preponderance would have torn the moist apart, since [in red bodies] the quantity of dry is enormously greater than that of moist. Reverse is the case with the white, for if [in white bodies] dry had not been on the opposite side of cold, the moist would have overpowered the dry. The meaning of spatial opposition between the natures is that they exist in mutual proximity, but they do not stand against each other in conflict. I mean in being face-to-face. Nor [are these natures separated from each other] by distance such as that which exists between the circumference of a circle and its centre. To be sure, had spatial opposition not existed between the natures (and, consequently, the hot in the red had overpowered [the cold], as is inevitable, and similarly the dry had overpowered [the moist]), then the body in question would have exploded. The same is true of all things which are artificially produced.

[23]

When a thing in equilibrium exists in an integral state, just as when it is not a [flowing] liquid, then among all things it necessarily occupies the medial position. An example of this among stones is the case of the three bodies, gold, silver, and copper, when viewed in terms of the quantities of their softness and hardness. As for the things other than stones, they are in some manner placed in equilibrium likewise. But this matter warrants further examination and research.

This is so because, [for example], the parts of all animals exist in an integral solid state, in which case being in equilibrium would mean being in an integral solid state. But if all of these parts happened to be fusible, then being in equilibrium would have meant being fusible, and if they happened to be soft, the characterization of equilibrium would have changed likewise. Indeed, if [the parts of animals] happened to have attributes other than these, they would have

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1. Like Aristotle, Jābir believes that hot and cold were active qualities, whereas dry and moist were passive (see *Meteor.*, 4.1, 378b; *Gen. et Corr.*, 1.6–7, 322b–324a; *ibid.*, 2.2, 329b–330a).

been considered to be in equilibrium in a similar manner... Since all parts of animals have their own proper constitution, in themselves they are all equally in equilibrium.

It is now abundantly clear that gold is not the most equilibrated metal: if the practitioners of the Art make it such, it is only because they derive worldly benefits out of it. Were they in a position to derive a similar benefit out of copper or lead, they would have made these latter the most equilibrated ones, and to these they would have directed their operations. So, one reaches the inescapable conclusion that gold is distinguished only from the point of view of its utility.

You ought to follow what we are saying, for you might need to transform an equilibrated object into one which is [allegedly] unequilibrated. This situation can arise if we were utterly to run out of copper, while facing a glut of silver and gold, and a need for copper. If gold were to be in equilibrium and copper were to be, in comparison, unstable, then we would need to transform the equilibrated gold into the unequilibrated copper, for this would be demanded by necessity.

But here we likewise say: The fruit of a tree is no more in equilibrium than its leaves even though the fruit yields more benefit than the leaves. Nay, one ought to give all things their due weight, for they interchange,<sup>1</sup> God willing! ...

[24]

Let us now consider those matters which concern the Balance of Letters in the elixir, just as we did in the *Book of the Arena of the Intellect*, God willing! So we proceed, seeking support from God.

Some of our earlier discourses have already rendered it unnecessary to define the elixir, for it is now known that the fundamental governing principle of the elixir is 17 and that it is divided into two kinds: red and white. If the elixir is red, it has a preponderance of hot and dry; if it is white, it has a preponderance of cold and moist. And, according to the opinion that is sound and free from corruption, the total effective weight of the elixir is [a multiple of 17, namely] 19 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs*. Indeed, all our examples signify the number 17 [even] if [in practice] we arrive at a number which is higher or lower. Thus, it behooves you to know that in all of them [sc. In all natural objects] the governing principle is 17, for the nature hot remains hot no matter where it happens to be, and the nature cold, wherever it exists, remains cold, and the same applies to moist and dry.

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1. That is, elements pass into one another—this is an assertion of Jābir's belief in transmutation.



[25]

This is so because the appellation applied to one nature is not applied to any other. For example, the appellation ‘*alif*’ is applied to no other letter, be it *bā*’, *jīm*, or *dāl*. Similarly, the appellation ‘*bā*’ is applied to none of the other three letters, *alif*, *jīm*, or *dāl*; and the appellation ‘*jīm*’ is applied to none of the letters from among *alif*, *bā*’, and *dāl*, and finally, the appellation ‘*dāl*’ is likewise applied to no other letter from among *alif*, *bā*’, and *jīm*.

If you intend to make a given ‘*alif*’ degenerate into a ‘*bā*’, or into a ‘*jīm*’ or a *dāl*’, [you can achieve this] provided you derive these letters from the Second Elements, namely, Fire, Air, Water, and Earth.<sup>1</sup> Upon my life! Some of these compounds undergo transmutation. All this we have meticulously explicated in the *Book of Morphology*; thus, the method has already been clarified: Pursue it! God the Most High willing!

[26]

[A]

Let us now return to what we began to say concerning the Balance of metals. So we say, our success depending on God: You ought to know, may God protect you, that metals differ from one another, for otherwise all of them would have been one and the same thing. Indeed, it seems proper [that they are diverse]. And among these metals there are those which [in their Balance] exceed 17, others which fall short of it, yet others [whose Balance] equals 17.

If, when analysing a thing, you find that it equals 17, don’t add anything, and don’t subtract anything. However, this is an exceedingly rare case. If you find a thing whose [Balance] is greater than 17, subtract it in proportion till it reaches 17. Proportionalized and regularized, it will correspond to that thing which is so rare as to be practically non-existent. So know that, and proceed accordingly!

If, on the other hand, you find a thing which in its Balance falls short of 17, complete it so that it becomes like that rare thing which is, as we said, practically non-existent. Proceed in this manner, for this is the way! God willing... .

So, God protect you, [in practice] everything either exceeds [17] or falls short [of it]—this is inevitable. Thus, one obtains the result that gold is among the excessive ones. Indeed, it behooves you to know the meaning of excessive and deficient, even though we have so far spoken of that which [is neither excessive nor deficient, namely that which] precisely conforms to 17, and, God protect you, such can only be the case of the elixir... .

[B]

So when a seeker desires to transform gold into elixir, he reduces [the weight of] each of its natures in such a way that this gold is left only with 17, whence the total

weight of the natures becomes 19 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs* [=  $17 \times 7$  *dān.*]; the rest is discarded.

Similarly, if the seeker desires to transform gold so that it acquires the properties of copper, he finds out, first, the total weight of [the natures in] copper; then, he finds out the weight [of the natures in] gold. Next, he compares the two weights to know which one is greater. If [the weight obtained from] gold turns out to be the greater of the two, the adept reduces it till it drops to the value [obtained from] copper. If, on the other hand, copper exceeds gold, he augments [the weights of the natures] in gold till it conforms to the definition of copper. However, gold necessarily exceeds copper ... I wish I knew how you will accomplish all this if you are not familiar with the *Hudūd*, and if you have not pondered over it! ...

[27]

People are seriously divided over the question of the weight of tin. Thus, some of them say, 'we determine its weight according to its name "*al-qala'ī*". But the Stoics say, 'no, its name is, rather "*al-raṣās*" since its sibling is called "*al-usrub*". 'No', say the followers of Empedocles, 'we determine its weight, rather, according to the appellation "*zāwus*" for its nature is most equilibrated, and that is what the word means'. But the followers of Pythagoras say, 'its name is, in fact, "*al-mushtarī*",<sup>1</sup> for it has the nature of this celestial body. We determine its weight in accordance with no appellation except "*al-mushtarī*", for it is *al-mushtarī* which governs it, guides it, and brings it forth. Nay, this is its only name'. As for Socrates, he judged in favour of '*zāwus*', and he is close to the truth. Balīnās said, 'its name is "*qaṣḍīr*" in which lies its weight; it has no other name'. The Peripatetics say, 'We determine its weight according to our description "hot and moist", for it has no name signifying its nature'.

From among these differing models, none merits our choice the way '*zāwus*' does; and if we were to substitute for it, we would opt for the description 'hot and moist'. Thus, that which we have illustrated in the figure<sup>2</sup> is worked out according to the name '*zāwus*', for '*al-qala'ī*' signifies something other than the name [of the metal in question]. Indeed, the name '*qaṣḍīr*' is also an accurate one and this is so because all [correct] names, while being different in different languages, seek to express a unique language—for what is [ultimately] sought is only the *meaning* of these differing names.

1. The planet Jupiter.

2. At the end of this part of our text, the author does produce a table of calculation of the weights of the natures in tin: indeed, this has been worked out according to the appellation '*Zāwus*'.

### The Third Part of the Book of Stones According to the Opinion of Balīnās

[28]

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.*

Praise the Creator and the Raiser of the Dead, the One Who subjects to His Acts whatever he chooses. He, who is Powerful over everything and is the Subjugator of all subjugators, The One Who causes the acts of all things, without a parallel and without a teacher; He acts not out of passion, nor under compulsion: nay, He acts as He wills! He is Magnanimous, Kind, Mighty, Wise!

So praise be to God, the Best of Creators!

God's blessings be upon Muḥammad, the Lord of all messengers, the Imam of the first ones and the last ones. All prayers be for him, according to what he merits, and for his noble family.

May God grant them all salvation!

[29]

Two books have preceded this one, dealing with the understanding of the Balances of stones. According to the commitment we made in these two books (I mean the first book and the second book), we shall specify in the present book, proceeding in a natural way, the forms which stones, plants and animal [substances] take upon combining with one another. Furthermore, we shall talk about the procedure for the creation of these substances. So we say ...

The things from which the elixir derives are [of seven possible kinds]: [i] pure stones, [ii] animal [substances] exclusively, [iii] plants only, [iv] animal [substances] *and* plants, [v] stones *and* plants, [vi] stones *and* animal [substances], and [vii] animals [substances] *and* plants *and* stones. This makes a total of seven patterns occurring in the pharmaceutical composition of the elixir, with each one of them having its own governing principles.

[A]

And if in response to an operation, some of them happen to differ from the others, [we know the reason why] for it is known that *alif* is for hot, *bā'* is for cold, *jīm* is for dry, and *dāl* is for moist. And, of course, the possibility remains for *alif* to exist in four different positions in the [name of a] compounded thing, since the Degrees [of intensity] are four. The same applies to *bā'*, *jīm* and *dāl*. And as we taught you in the beginning, the weights of these four positions of *alif* have correspondingly four different values, namely: 1 *dirham* and 1 *dānaq* [= 7 *dān.*], 3½ *dirhams* [= 21 *dān.*], 5 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs* [= 35 *dān.*], or 7 *dirhams* and 2 *dānaqs* [= 56 *dān.*]... .

[B]

So turn to the stone you wish to operate upon, and [whose natures] you want to augment by means of an appropriate method of creation. You find out its weight. If it happens to be an elixir, its weight will be [exactly] 19 *dirhams* and 5 *dānaqs* [=  $17 \times 7$  *dān.*]. But if it is something other than elixir, it will weigh either more or less, depending upon the quantity of the natures in the stone under consideration. So know that!

Augmentation, I mean creation, is carried out in the same manner [in all stones]. Thus, if the stone possesses hot in the First Degree, add a fifth in the First Degree; if it possesses hot in the Second Degree, add a fifth in the Second Degree; if it possesses hot in the Third Degree, add a fifth in the Third Degree; [finally], if it possesses hot in the Fourth Degree, add a fifth in the Fourth Degree. The weight of the fifth in the First Degree is 1 *qīrāt* [=  $\frac{1}{2}$  *dān.*], in the Second Degree  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *dānaqs*, in the Third Degree  $2\frac{1}{2}$  *dānaqs*, and in the Fourth Degree 4 *dānaqs*.

So in the case of things composed of stones only, this is what is necessary for carrying out ceration by means of hot-augmentation.

As for the procedure of cold-augmentation, the rules for this are exactly the same as those of hot which we have just described. The same applies to the procedures of the augmentation of moist and dry. . . . In other words, you find out which from among hot, cold, dry and moist is preponderant in the thing you want to operate upon. Then, you add a fifth to the most dominant nature in these stones. As we have said, a thing is not cerated except by means of [an augmentation of] its characteristically predominant nature. So know this procedure, and follow it in the operations you need to perform on drugs made out of stones only.

[c]

Concerning the elixir made out of animal [substances] only. If you wish either to cerate it, or to transform it from one thing to another, you add a fourth to that nature which is likewise the predominant of the four. If this nature is in the First Degree [of intensity], you add a fourth in the First Degree, in which case the weight of the fourth is 1 *dānaq*; if the predominant nature is in the Second Degree, you add a fourth in the Second Degree; here the fourth reaches a weight of  $\frac{1}{2}$  *dirham* [= 3 *dān.*]; if this nature is in the Third Degree, add a fourth in the Third degree, the weight of the fourth here being 5 *dānaqs*; and, finally, if this predominant nature is in the fourth degree, you add a fourth in the Fourth Degree, where the fourth attains a weight of 2 *dirhams* and 2 *dānaqs* [= 8 *dān.*].

So know that!

[D]

And if the elixir which you want to cerate or transform ... Happens to be made exclusively out of plants, you find out likewise the most dominant of its four natures and add to it a third. If its most dominant nature is in the First Degree of intensity, you add a third in the First Degree, the weight of the third in this case being  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *dānaqs*; if this nature is in the Second Degree, you add a third in the Second Degree; here the weight of the third is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  *dānaqs*; if this nature is in the Third Degree, you add a third in the Third Degree; and, finally, if it happens to be in the Fourth Degree, you add a third in the Fourth Degree. The weight of the third in the Third Degree is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *dirhams* [=  $7\frac{1}{2}$  *dān.*], and in the Fourth Degree it is 2 *dirhams* [= 12 *dān.*]...

## [30] [On Quality]

Quality is a certain condition of the qualified thing. I mean the condition by virtue of which the thing is qualified. Among these conditions are those which exist in actuality, such as the walking of ‘Abd Allāh when he is, in fact, walking. Further, among such actually existing conditions are either those which change or disappear quickly, for example standing, sitting, being in a state of embarrassment or anger, and the like—such actually existing conditions do not last long; or those which [are more stable and] do not change or disappear quickly, such as [the knowledge of] geometry, medicine, or music when [such knowledge] is actually present in an individual.

And among the conditions are those which exist in potentially, as walking is to ‘Abd Allāh (thus, animals are plants in potentiality, in actuality they are not, and the same applies to stones in relation to plants and animals). Similar is the case of the acquisition of [the knowledge] of geometry when it is unacquired [in actuality]. Further, potential conditions exist either [a] as a capacity in a thing, such as our saying that ‘Abd Allāh is [in a state of being] fallen to the ground when he has the capacity to do so; or [b] as a natural affection, such as our saying that a given stone is hard, meaning that it cannot be divided easily, or that a given piece of wood is soft, meaning that it can be broken apart without difficulty.

Things are rarely said in discourse to be qualified—I mean characterized—by those conditions which change or disappear quickly. Thus, we do not call pallid the one who turns yellow out of fright, nor swarthy the one who turns black due to a journey [in the heat of the sun]. And as for the conditions, which last longer, things might be said to be qualified by them. Thus we call yellow (or, say, black) that which acquires this colour as part of its natural make-up (likewise, if it acquires some other condition which is not easily removed, [it is called accordingly]). And these, I mean the conditions which do not disappear easily, are the ones which

ought necessarily to be called qualities, since the essential nature of a thing is qualified by them.

Similarly there might be in the soul either [a] easily disappearing conditions, such as sadness or happiness arising out of a certain specific reason and passing away quickly, or [b] longer lasting conditions, such as sadness or happiness arising out of one's innate disposition for it. Obviously the latter is identical [in appearance] to the former. However, we neither characterize as sad one who is sad for a short period of time for some reason, nor happy one who is happy briefly. Rather, we do so when these are part of someone's essential nature, whence permanent or preponderant.

Shape, external form, straightness, curvedness, and the like are also qualities, for each one of these is said to qualify things. Thus, we might say of a thing that it is a triangle or a square, or that it is straight or curved. Rareness, denseness, roughness, smoothness and the like might be thought of as qualities; they seem however not to belong to qualities. This is so because, to be precise, a thing is dense when its parts are close together; rare when they are separated from one another, smooth because its parts lie uniformly on a straight line—none being above or below another, and rough when they are otherwise.

Qualities are possibly of other kinds too. Among these other kinds which we shall mention are [a] those which are perceived by the eye, like shapes and colours; [b] those which are perceived by the sense of smell, like perfumes; [c] those which are perceived by the sense of taste, like the savour of food; [d] those which are perceived by the sense of touch, like hot or cold; [e] those which exist in the intellect, like knowledge and ignorance; [f] which lie in the capacity of things, like the ability or inability to do something—and these exist either actually or potentially; [g] those which are stable; [h] those which are unstable; [i] those which are active; and [j] those which are passive.

Qualified things are named after their quality. Thus in most cases things are named paronymously—such as *kātib* from *kitābah*, *tājir* from *tijārah*, *jā'ir* from *jawr*, *ādil* from *ādil*. Yet this may not be so in all cases, either because the quality in question exists in potentiality, or due to the fact that language lacks a name for it.

There is contrariety in regard to qualification. For example, justice is contrary to injustice and whiteness to blackness, and so on. Similarly, there is contrariety in regard to qualified things. For example, just is contrary to unjust and white to black. But, [on the other hand], there is no contrary to red or yellow or such colours. Likewise, there is no contrary to triangle and circle.

Further, when one of a pair of contraries is a qualification, the other too will be a qualification. This is clear if one examines the other categories. For example, justice is contrary to injustice and justice is a qualification, then injustice too is a qualification, for neither of the other categories fits injustice, neither

quantity, for example, nor relation, place, time, nor any other category except qualification.

Qualifications admit of a more and a less, for it may be said that this whiteness is more than that, or that this thing is whiter than that—not in all cases though, but in most. Thus it might be questioned whether it is permissible to call one justice more a justice than another, or one health more a health than another. Some people say that it is not permissible, yet they say that one person has health less than another, justice less than another, and similarly with writing and other conditions. So, as for things spoken of in virtue of these, they unquestionably admit of a more and a less, for it may well be said that this man is more eloquent than that, this man is more just than that, or that this man is better with regard to justice and health.

However, not all things spoken of in virtue of a quality admit of a more and a less. For example, the triangle is spoken of in virtue of the quality of triangularity, and the square in virtue of the quality of squareness: these two do not admit of a more and a less. For, one triangle does not exceed another in respect of triangularity, and one square does not possess more squareness than another. All triangles are equally said to be triangles, and the same applies to circles and squares.

Things which are equally said to be triangles [and thus] equally said to fall under the definition [of triangularity] are not called more or less with respect to that definition; the same holds for circles and squares. Conversely, when two things are not said to fall under one definition, the definition of one is not applied to the other. In general, all things which are equally said to fall under a given definition, as well as two things which are not said to fall under one definition, such things do not admit of a more and a less.

One speaks of a more and a less only in cases where the [quality to whose] definition a thing conforms sustains increase and decrease; for example a white thing which conforms to the definition of being white can very well be more or less with respect to whiteness.

It is only in virtue of a universally defined quality that things are said to be similar or dissimilar; for a thing is not similar to another except in virtue of its quality. For example, this triangle is not similar to that triangle except in virtue of the triangle which has already been universally defined.

It may be said that though we only proposed to discuss qualities we have frequently mentioned relatives since we have spoken of knowledge and the like, and knowledge exists in virtue of the known. Indeed, the genera comprehending these things, I mean the universals, are spoken of in virtue of something else, such as knowledge which is spoken of in virtue of the known. But, none of the individuals [of a given genus], i.e., none of the particular cases [of a given universal], are spoken of in virtue of something else. For example, knowledge, [a genus], is called knowledge of something, but grammar, [a particular case], is not called grammar

of something. This is so unless the particular case is set forth as the genus, that is, given the name of the universal, which in this case is knowledge—then, grammar would be called knowledge of something. Thus the particular cases are not relatives and there is nothing absurd in a thing's falling under two different genera.

#### **The Fourth Part of the Book of Stones According to the Opinion of Balīnās**

[31]

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds! May God's blessings be upon our Master Muḥammad and his household.

The one who recalls what we said in the first, second and third parts of this book would know that we have promised to explicate in this [final] part of the Balances of spirits, those substances which function as spirits. We shall accomplish this by means of illustrative figures following the pattern on which we constructed in the second part the figures for bodies.<sup>1</sup> We have also promised that in this part we shall spell out how one goes about augmenting what is deficient, and suppressing what is excessive.<sup>2</sup>

At this point in time we turn at once to operations involving spirits. Immediately following this, we shall familiarize ourselves with augmentation and suppression, and this will mark the end of these four books.

So we say: In fire, spirits are unlike bodies—but not with respect to colour, hardness or casting, for all spirits, or [at least] most of them, may have the same colours as those of bodies—red, white, black, etc.; in terms of casting, spirits may be similar to bodies, since all spirits undergo casting in fire the way bodies do, behaving in the same manner. Finally, in terms of hardness some spirits may function like bodies, just as in terms of softness certain bodies may function as some spirits. We are setting forth a specific account of the spirits and the bodies, to the exclusion of others, since it behooves us to know that the Art does not exist except due to spirits and bodies; [that is to say], there is no Art except in virtue of the three kingdoms of nature since [in the real world] nothing else exists.

As for animal [substances], when distilled they yield two spirits and two bodies; the oil and the water which come out of them are spirits, whereas the tincture and the earth which they yield are bodies... . The same applies to plants. Concerning stones, the situation depends on whether or not they lend themselves to distillation. If they do, then the same applies to them too.

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1. At the end of the book Jābir does give illustrative calculations of the weights of the natures in spirits.

2. The point is repeated that if upon analysis of the name of the spirit the total weight of the natures is not found to be exactly 17 or its multiple, one augments/suppresses the natures.



But if they do not lend themselves to distillation, they are divided into two types: those which vaporize, and those which do not. Those which do vaporize yield two kinds of substances: what vaporizes from them is spirit, and what is left as residue is body. And those which do not evaporate divide likewise into two kinds: the aqueous kind, and the calcined kind. The former is spirit, the latter body. The aqueous kind, in its turn, divides further into two kinds: the kind that flees, and the kind that does not. As for the one that flees from fire, it is spirit, and that which does not, even though it is water, is body.

So this is the complete alchemical classification of the matters relating to all natures, and this is exactly what we have already mentioned in the *Book of the Complete*<sup>1</sup> belonging to the CXII Books.

## [32]

As for the transformation of bodies from one state into another higher or lower state, it is according to our doctrine [an interchange between] the exterior and the interior, for in reality this is what exterior and interior are. The reason is that all the constituents of all things follow a circular pattern of change.

The exterior of a body is manifest, whereas its interior is latent, and it is the latter in which lies the benefit. For example, lead in its exterior is foul-smelling lead, and it is manifest to all people. But in its interior it is gold, and this is hidden. However, if this latter is extracted out, then both the interior and the exterior of lead will become manifest.

## [33]

Thus there is the Balance of Fire and the Balance of the rest of the bodies. There are Balances of the natures of stars, their distances, acts and movements. There is also the Balance by means of which one knows the Sphere, just as one learns through the Balance that the essential characteristics of things arise out of the natures. Those who have read our book known as *The End Attained*<sup>2</sup> and our *Book of the Sun*<sup>3</sup> are acquainted with most of these Balances, even with the Balance of the Soul and the Balance of the Intelligence, after which there is no end. And since all of these are intangible, it would not be difficult for such readers to measure the Balance of animals and plants, for these exist in nature and are tangible... .

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1. Kr. 71–73.

2. Kr. 373. This work belongs to the Books of Balances.

3. Kr. 51. This is the title of a lost treatise which is part of the CXII collection. There is also a *Kitāb al-mirrikh wa'l-shams* (Book of Mars and the Sun) in the LXX collection (Kr. 189).

*Chapter on the curriculum for the training of the disciple*

[34]

[A]

First you ought to understand a simple thing concerning the Art. That is, you familiarize yourself with the substances which are reddened, whitened, coagulated, dissolved, softened, and dehydrated.<sup>1</sup> Further to this, you ought to know that all these processes are carried out by the method of Balance. This has been explained to you in the lucid accounts given in many books of ours; [for example], we have thoroughly explicated this already in the *Result*, the *Book of Morphology*, the *Balance*,<sup>2</sup> and in a book belonging to the CXII known as the *Book of Tinctures*.

Then, you ought to know the First, Second, Third and the Fourth Elements, [their] accidents and their qualities.<sup>3</sup> For example, [you ought to know that] Fire and its sisters are the Second Elements,<sup>4</sup> durations of time are the Third, and black and yellow compounds are the Fourth Elements.

You see how your personal nature accepts all this, how you handle this, and how the results suit your natural disposition. If you already see that your mind has rejected one specific thing while you are [comfortably] handling several others, you ought first to persist in reading. You should particularly read the *Commentary on the Book of the Elements of Foundation*, if it has reached you. But if you have already moved beyond this stage, congratulations!

Having accomplished this, we now move up to the sayings of philosophers and their doctrines concerning the natures and their combinations. Pick up a modicum of *kalām*, logic, arithmetic and geometry. To some extent this will render your conceptual grasp of problems easy when they exercise you. But if you are already somewhat trained in these disciplines, the task will be simpler for you, and this would be a more favourable situation.

Next, depending on your choice, you handle the science of the natures, or some other discipline. If you prefer the science of the natures, you study aspects of the natures of stones and the [science of the] specific properties of things.

Then you move in a single leap to the Balances. Thus, you familiarize yourself step by step with all aspects of various kinds of Balances, such as the Balance of Fire, of music, and the Balances of metals. Some of these we have already mentioned in several books, particularly in the *Book of the Elite*.

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1. For a detailed account of these chemical processes see H. E. Stapleton, R. F. Azo and M. H. Husain, 'Chemistry in Iraq and Persia in the 10th Century AD', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1927) 8, 315.

2. See note 4, p. 66.

3. Note the distinction Jābir maintains between *tab'* and *kayfiyya*.

4. See Chapter 3 above.

And if along with the science of the natures you are inclined toward the knowledge of the craft, you study the *Book of Trickeries*<sup>1</sup> so that you can be on your guard against the occurrence of calamities, loss of wealth, and frauds.

The next step now is to become skilled in [matters presented in] the *Book of the Balance*.<sup>2</sup> You should know in what manner and for what reason these things are combined. Now, we have already told you that by this time you ought to have become accomplished and quick-witted.

If [the disciple] does not finish my book, the *Seven*,<sup>3</sup> he will remain deficient in his [knowledge of] the Balances. If, on the contrary, he is trained in it, he will be in a position to construct whatever he wishes.

All that the disciple needs now is the [skill for the] handling of alchemical operations. Restituted from accounts scattered in [a large body of alchemical] writings, these are operations such as ceration, waterings, pulverization, dissolutions, and coagulations.<sup>4</sup> Another example is that [of the elixir] about which people have been talking since ancient times. But the ancients have wrapped in ever deeper mysteries the method of operations relating to the Supreme Thing. Now, as we have already told you, this difficulty is overcome by nothing other than the [method of] the Balances. So know this method if you intend to achieve a close approximation [of the ideal elixir] or whatever you intend according to your desire.

Proceed with the understanding that this is an art which demands special skills; nay, it is the greatest of all arts for it [concerns] an ideal entity which exists only in the mind.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the more one occupies oneself with prolonged studies, the quicker it will be to achieve a synthesis [of the elixir]. But the one who makes only a brief study, his achievement will be [slower] in the same proportion. Know that the fruit of the Balances are the higher operations performed on the products of syntheses and elixirs.

[B]

The Balance comes about only after the mixing of bodies with bodies, spirits with bodies, metals with bodies, spirits with spirits, stones with spirits, or stones with bodies and spirits; the Balance comes about after these substances are mixed [in these specified ways].

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1. Kr 1063. This work is not extant.

2. There are two works in the Jābirean corpus with this title, Kr 197 and Kr 366. Both are lost.

3. A Book of the Seven is part of the LXX (Kr 132). Also found in the corpus is a collection of seven books, one on each of the seven metals (gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead, and *khārṣīmī*), and this is likewise referred to by the author as the Sab'a (Kr 947–953).

4. A fuller discussion of these operations is in Stapleton, Azo and Husain [1927].

5. Note the categorical statement that elixirs are only ideal substances and do not actually exist.

Even if spirits, bodies, and metals are in an impure state, weigh them after they are mixed together. Familiarize yourself with all of their constituent natures and know their equilibrium. The Canon of Equilibrium is known to you—if they conform to it, they are perfect. But if they are [quantitatively] higher or lower [than 17], suppress or augment the natures accordingly whence one would obtain from them exactly 17 parts... .

[35]

People hold diverse views concerning these [sc. Cosmological] issues. Among them are those who give due consideration to the Balances and proceed with the assumption that the principle of everything is the natures. And among them are those who say that in the natural world one thing was created before another. So, a group of Sabians and their followers believe that some fundamental building blocks of the natural world would have, over others, a priority in existence. But this priority, [they say], is not with regard to arrangement or organization, rather it is a temporal and qualitative priority. Thus I have seen one of them claiming that the first thing which was created in matter is the three dimensions—length, breadth and depth—whence matter became a three-dimensional primitive body. Next, [according to this claim], the four qualities—namely, hot, cold, moist and dry—were created in it, and from this arose the natures of things and the elements of creation. Finally, [so the claim goes], the four natures mixed with one another to form compounds, and out of these arose all individuals and all undifferentiated forms existing in this world.

To those [holding such views] it ought to be said: ‘You have introduced several unknowable stages [in your account of the creation of the natural world], and none of them makes sense! You even go so far as to explain the existence of the world [in terms of these stages], whatever they may be...’

[A]

So we say [to them], our success depending on God:

‘[According to you], the first of these stages [of creation] is *ṭīnah* which is indestructible. [You believe that] it is not a body, nor is it predicated of anything that is predicated of a body. It is, you claim, the undifferentiated form of things and the element of created objects. The picture of this *ṭīnah* [you tell us], exists [only] in the imagination, and it is impossible to visualize it as a defined entity.

You say that the second stage arrives when the three dimensions come to pass in this *ṭīnah* whence it becomes a body. This body, [you claim], is not predicated of any of [the four natures], hot, cold, moist and dry, nor is it predicated of any colour, taste, smell, or of motion or rest, for, [according to you], all these are qualities, and at this stage qualities do not come to pass in it.

Now [all] this is nonsense!

Then you claim that after this second stage the four qualities<sup>1</sup> come to pass in this body, namely the qualities hot, cold, moist and dry. From these arise the four [elementary bodies], Fire, Air, Water and Earth. But quite obviously it makes no sense to suppose that these four natures exist in any state or condition not defined by the organization and arrangement in which they are now found in the natural world. Thus, Earth is in the middle of the Sphere, Water is above Earth, Air above Water, and Fire above Air. Further, each of the four natures tends to overpower its contrary, with the subdued transforming into the triumphant. Plants and animals exist along with these natures, deriving from them, and transforming [back] into them. Now the afore-described stages [of creation] proffered by you are all intangible. But, as compared to what you describe, it is easier and less demanding on one's imagination to visualize that things arise but not out of a single [abstract] entity.

[B]

Or [let us ask them that] they tell us if it is possible for Water to be created from the same prime matter as the one from which Fire is created. If they say yes, they lapse into inconsistencies, for a given thing which gives rise to something else is the prime matter of the latter. As they say, the sperm of man is the prime matter of man, and the sperm of donkey the prime matter of donkey. Thus they deem it absurd to suppose that the sperm of man admits the form of a donkey, since the former is not the prime matter of the latter, just as it is equally absurd to suppose that the sperm of donkey admits the form of a man. It is therefore necessary according to this reasoning that the thing which admits the form of Fire is the prime matter of Fire, and being such it cannot possibly admit the form of Water.

[C]

If they say:

We see Water undergoing transformation and thus turning into Fire. [In this process], the substance which was the carrier first of the qualities and characteristics of Water is the carrier now of the qualities and characteristics of Fire. Thus whatever is essentially true of the former is essentially true also of the latter; it is only the accidents of the substance which have changed. Therefore, the eternal prime matter is one and the same—it is the carrier of the qualities and dispositions of Water if they come to pass in it and those of Fire if these latter come to pass in it.

Then in reply we say:

Water does not transform in a single stroke into Fire. Rather, it transforms first into vapours and then becomes Air. Next, Air undergoes transformation and,

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1. Note the very rare application of the term *kayfiyyāt* to primary qualities.

[finally], turns into Fire. If someone says that Water transforms, first, into Air and, then, transforms into Fire, he is indeed speaking of a transformation [process] which makes [perfect] sense.

Further, your doctrine concerning the simple, indestructible prime matter is not consistent with this, for you do not say that it is only by way of the aforementioned transmutations that Fire is created out of the thing from which, in the first instance, Water is created. Rather you say, 'It is possible that the prime matter which is overtaken by the nature and characteristics of Water is subsequently overtaken instead by the natures and characteristics of Fire.' And, according to you, this takes place without the intermediary of the transformation that lies between Water and Fire. This makes no sense!

They, claim that prior to acquiring forms and before the occurrence in it of the natures, the eternal prime matter is endowed with the potentiality only of accepting in the first instance the characteristics and qualities of Fire. There is a kind of prime matter which is endowed with the potentiality of accepting the characteristics and qualities of Water, and the same goes for Earth and Air. It is through this doctrine that they demonstrate the creation of the four eternally indestructible elements which possess different potentials. But, then, this refutes their affirmation that the First Element is unique and does not admit of diversity.

[D]

They are asked: 'Is it admissible that things return to the eternal prime matter the way they arose out of it?' If they say, 'no, it is not admissible', one might ask, 'but why not?' If they say, 'this is annihilation of things, for then things will be returning to something which is simple, not admitting of combination', then we respond, 'and what harm do you see in saying that things will return to that which happens to be indestructible on account of its being an eternal cause. And, further, what harm do you see in saying that while prime matter is simple and it possesses no combinations, it will annihilate the world?'

[E]

It [ought to be] said to them: A majority of philosophers believe that the four natures, which are the fundamental principles of creation and are the elements of the things (I mean [the elements of the primary bodies] Fire, Air, Water and Earth), potentially exist in one another. Thus those people lapse in inconsistencies who say that the four natures exist in something other than themselves and that they exist in something other than what arises out of them. Such people declare it inconceivable that things can exist in any other way.

So if someone alleges that these four natures are only to be found existing potentially in something other than themselves, and in something other than what arises out of them, let him bring a proof of his hypothesis. [Indeed], he will never be able

to do so, for it is irrational [to espouse a hypothesis] which stands in disagreement with this doctrine [sc. the doctrine of the philosophers] and which contravenes the organization and arrangement [of which we have spoken]!

[F]

The incorrectness of their affirmation is deduced from what the philosophers consider as an indubitable premise and an item of necessary knowledge. Namely: It is absurd to suppose that a substance can exist without any natural or fabricated acts, so that this substance has no act either in itself or in anything else.

[Yet] this is [precisely] the nature which these people declare as eternal, claiming that it is the element of things and that the prime matter which arises out of it is indestructible and is devoid of all natural and fabricated acts. And this is the theory which is dismissed by the philosophers who deny the existence of such an entity. To support [their idea of] a substance devoid of all acts they [sc. The upholders of this theory] have been able neither to offer a proof of what they claim, nor to establish it by an indirect demonstration.

[G]

Since the case is other than all this, the natures are [to be understood] according to what we elucidated for you in all the preceding books, namely that the natures are the fundamental principle [of the real world], and that they are subject to the acts of the Creator, may His praise be exalted! And from this you become familiar with the method of attaining [the knowledge of] the Natural Balance, nay, you even become an expert of all compounds that are constituted out of the natures, able to distinguish goodness from corruption.

[36]

After accomplishing all this, the disciple moves to the task of verbal and written discourse so that his skills reach perfection. If, [following this], his insight in the Art matches his insight in the Science, and if in applications he possesses a refinement of quality, he is to be called a perfect philosopher!

This ultimately brings us to an end, being the final stage required in the training of the disciple whence the disciple meets our definition and description of him. At this time he is among those people who are closest to us!

Now, without delay, we shall present the figures which illustrate Balances, followed by a figure [illustrating] augmentation and suppression. This is the conclusion of the book, God the Most High willing! .

## Abū Ya‘qūb Sijistānī

Abū Ya‘qūb Ishāq ibn Aḥmad Sijistānī was a central figure in the early period of Ismaili thought in Persia. Some scholars have even identified him as the leading philosopher of the ‘Persian School’ of Ismaili intellectual thought. Reports of his life in the literature of the period are sketchy at best. His date of birth is unknown and the only evidence we have of the date of his death is found in Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh’s *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* (Collection of Histories) where it is said that he was executed by Amīr Khalaf ibn Aḥmad of the Ṣaffārid dynasty, i.e., before 393/1002. He was a younger contemporary of Fārābī and may have succeeded Abū Ḥātim Rāzī as the *dā‘ī* in Rayy and Muḥammad Nasafī as the person in charge of the *da‘wah* in Khurāsān and Transoxania.

Sijistānī appears to have been well-versed in the body of Islamic thought available at the time, as well as in Greek philosophy and Neoplatonism. While philosophically he makes use of the ideas of Abū Ḥātim Rāzī and Muḥammad Nasafī, except in a few minor cases he does not acknowledge their contributions. Sijistānī did not compose any work on the doctrine of the Imamate, nor did he emphasize the direct and personal authority of the living Imam as so many Ismaili authors have done. Instead, he wrote on prophecy and the need to use philosophical arguments.

In the translations we have included here are several sections of Sijistānī’s most significant works, *Kashf al-mahjūb* (The Unveiling of the Hidden) and *Kitāb al-yanābī‘* (The Book of Wellsprings). The *Kashf al-mahjūb*, perhaps Sijistānī’s *magnum opus*, is an important source book for the Ismaili thought of the Fatimid period. It appears almost in its entirety in this chapter accompanied by Hermann Landolt’s introduction to his translation as prepared for this *Anthology*.<sup>1</sup>

The *Kitāb al-yanābī‘* consists of forty wellsprings (*yanābī‘*). It begins with the meaning of ‘wellspring’, the rigorous affirmation of divine unity; and the absolute

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<sup>1</sup> A fully revised version of the complete work will be found in his forthcoming *Creation and Resurrection: Divine Unity and the Universal Process: A Persian Edition and English Translation of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī’s Kashf al-mahjūb*.



purity of God who stands above all attributes of being and nonbeing. The central thesis of this treatise addresses the problem of the Intellect and epistemology. It also covers such themes as the Intellect's imperishability, its tranquillity and quiescence, its position as the first originated being prior to which nothing can be conceived, its immateriality, how it communicates with the soul, and several categories of its properties. In short, the Intellect, according to Sijistānī, is the sum of existent beings to which he refers as *al-sābiq* (the Preceder), a standard term in the Ismaili metaphysical literature with its cosmological doctrine. The soul emanates from the Intellect and is regulated and directed by the Intellect. Through the persisting influence in the soul, the Intellect comes into the beings engendered by the soul. Thus nature, which has an effect on the soul, preserves in itself rational qualities, and man obtains the benefits of the Intellect through the part of the soul in him that 'contains' the Intellect. When guided exclusively by the Intellect, the soul returns to an intelligible or spiritual world; therefore knowledge for Sijistānī comprises more than instinctual and learned apprehension of intelligible matter. Besides these two categories of knowledge there exists a special category of inspired or revealed truth granted exclusively to the *mu'ayyadūn* (divinely guided, or inspired individuals, namely the prophets) so that they can guide human souls to come closer to the intelligible or spiritual world.

Concerning the significance of this book, it suffices to say that Nāṣir-i Khusraw either translated fully or paraphrased all forty chapters of *al-Yanābi'* in Persian and incorporated them into his own work *Kitāb khwān al-ikhwān* (The Feast of the Brethren). The chapters translated here address three central themes: *tawḥīd*, on Intellect and soul, and the esoteric hermeneutics of the symbolism of the cross. Relying on *ta'wīl* (spiritual hermeneutics), Sijistānī attempts to show the essential unity between Islam and Christianity. A critical edition of the text, together with a partial French translation, was published by Henry Corbin in his *Trilogie ismaélienne*, (Paris-Tehran, 1961). The translation prepared for this book by Latima Parvin Peerwani is based on Corbin's edition. The numbers in the round brackets in the body of the text refer to the paragraphs of Corbin's edition. The content in the square brackets is from the translator.

M. Aminrazavi

## UNVEILING OF THE HIDDEN

*Kashf al-mahjūb*

## Introduction to the Translation

That Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, one of the pillars of the so-called Persian school of fourth/tenth-century Ismailism,<sup>1</sup> wrote a major work titled *Kashf al-mahjūb* or *The Unveiling of the Hidden*, and that some of its contents were from the start subject to considerable doctrinal controversy inside and outside Ismailism, are well-attested facts thanks to early references made to this work by three independent writers, the anti-Ismaili Zaydī polemicist Abū'l-Qāsim al-Bustī (d. 420/1030), the great scholar al-Bīrūnī in his *India* (written in 421/1030), and the Ismaili theologian Nāṣir-i Khusraw (5th/11th century), as will be discussed below. Although very little is certain about Sijistānī's life—he is said to have been executed under the governorship of the Ṣaffārid Amīr of Khurāsān, Khalaf b. Aḥmad, which could mean any time between 353/964–965 and 393/1002–1003—it would appear that the *Kashf al-mahjūb* belongs to the later period of his career and was probably written after the *Kitāb al-iftikhār*—that is, during the very last years of the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh (341/953–365/975), or perhaps even later.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately,

1. Several important studies by Paul E. Walker on Sijistānī and his thought are available, notably his *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismā'īlī Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary* (London, 1996). See also Paul E. Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A Study of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's Kitāb al-Yanābī'* including a complete English translation with commentary and notes on the Arabic text (Salt Lake City, UT, 1994). The Arabic text of the *Kitāb al-yanābī'* had previously been edited, with a French introduction and an annotated partial translation, by Henry Corbin, in *Trilogie Ismaélienne* (Tehran and Paris, 1961). In the present introduction, *Wellsprings* refers to the paras of this Arabic text unless otherwise specified. The paras can easily be identified in either translation.

2. The *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, in which Sijistānī shows great pride in the achievements of the Fatimids, was written 'more than 350 years' after the death of the Prophet, ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut, 1980), 82, i.e., after 360/970–71, at a time at which 'God fulfils His promise by manifesting the banner of [the] *qā'im* on the head of one of his [i.e., the latter's] representatives (*khulafā'ih*) ... in an unprecedented way' (ibid., 83)—evidently a reference to al-Mu'izz. Although our text does not name al-Mu'izz or any other 'representative' of the *qā'im*, it clearly refers in the prologue to a Fatimid 'Friend of God on this Earth of Convocation' and implies (VI. 7. 4.) that the 'Lord of the Final Rising' comes as seventh after seven (not six!) prophetic 'Enunciators': and al-Mu'izz is regarded as the 'seventh' after the seventh Imam. Moreover, the allusion to the 'courage of the Berbers' in V. 5. 3. probably refers to the role played by Berber support of the Fatimid cause in Egypt. If we can trust the Persian translation, the allusion in VII. 1. 1. To the 'second Intellect' would suggest an even later date since this notion, though famous in philosophy since Fārābī (d. 339/950), does not appear in Sijistānī's other works and belongs properly in Ismailism to the doctrine of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1021). Indeed it is the latter who, in his *Kitāb al-riyāḍ*, identifies the Neoplatonic Soul with his 'second Intellect', thereby criticizing Sijistānī for having given it too low a status in his *al-Nuṣrah*. Cf. Daniel de Smet, *La quiétude de l'intellect: Néoplatonisme et gnose ismaélienne dans l'oeuvre de Ḥamīd ad-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (Xe/XIe s.) (Leuven, 1995), pp. 229–234.

however, no manuscript of the original version, which was presumably written in Arabic, has been found. What we have instead is a Persian translation or paraphrase by an anonymous writer, which has been dated for linguistic reasons to the fifth/eleventh century and might therefore be in reality the work of Nāṣir-i Khusraw or, more likely, another Ismaili author of that period, such as the equally anonymous commentator of the *Qaṣīdah* of Abu'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī.<sup>1</sup> Preserved in a unique manuscript copied sometime before 804/1402 that belonged to the library of the late Naṣr Allāh Taqawī, this Persian version was edited and published with an introduction for the first time in 1949 by Henry Corbin as volume 1 of the series *Bibliothèque Iranienne*.<sup>2</sup> One year earlier, Corbin had also completed his own French translation of the Persian text, but this was published only in 1988 in a posthumous edition under the title *Le Dévoilement des choses cachées: Recherches de philosophie ismaélienne*.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that the English translation offered here for the first time has greatly benefited from Corbin's work, although it is of course based on my own reading of the Persian text. In addition, I have consulted the two other manuscripts of the Persian text known to exist, even though both of these are in fact no more than independent modern transcripts of the Taqavī *unicum*.<sup>4</sup> The present location of the latter is not known to me.

Space being limited in an anthology, roughly two thirds of the Persian text has been selected here for translation. Each of the seven chapters or 'discourses'

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Note, however, that the Soul enjoys a relatively elevated status even in the *Wellsprings* (e.g., Para. 122), which was certainly written before the *Kitāb al-iftikhār*.

1. For a linguistic analysis of our Persian text, see Gilbert Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris, 1963), p. 87. Given that Nāṣir-i Khusraw translated much of Sijistānī's *Wellsprings*, he remains a possible candidate, although a rather unlikely one, as was already pointed out by Henry Corbin (see following note) in his introduction to our text, 14. In fact, the commentator of the *Qaṣīdah* of Abu'l-Haytham Jurjānī (tentatively identified by H. Corbin and M. Mu'in in their edition of his *Sharḥ-i Qaṣīdah-yi Abu'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Bibliothèque Iranienne, 6 (Tehran and Paris, 1334/1955), with one Muḥammad-i Surkh of Nayshāpūr seems a more likely candidate because this text has more than one point in common with ours (cf. *infra*, especially p. 107, n. 1).

2. Abū Ya'qūb Sejestānī: *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (*Le Dévoilement des choses cachées*). *Traité ismaélien du IV<sup>me</sup> siècle de l'Hégire. Texte persan publié avec une introduction par Henry Corbin* (Tehran and Paris, 1327/1949); 2nd edition (Tehran, 1358/1979).

3. Ed. Christian Jambet (Lagrasse, 1988).

4. MS. Tehran = Tehrān, Adabīyyāt 194 j, copy from the Taqavī manuscript, completed 9 Muḥarram 1359/27 Bahman 1318 [February, 1940], by Muḥammad 'Alī Muṣāḥibī Nā'inī, known as 'Ibrat'. See Aḥmad Munzawī, *Fihrist-i nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī* (Tehran, 1348), p. 829.

MS. Cairo = Dār al-Kutub 1792, incomplete photocopy made in 1935 of a MS. transcribed from the Taqavī manuscript in Ṣafār, 1350 [June-July, 1931] by Ibrāhīm Zanjānī in Tehran. See Munzawī, *ibid.*, and Ismā'il K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismā'īlī Literature* (Malibu, CA, 1977), p. 88. This photocopy contains both the *Kashf al-mahjūb* and Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Gushāyish wa rahāyish*, but with a substantial lacuna in the middle, cutting 18 pages from the end of the former (in the Corbin edition) and 64 pages from the beginning of the latter (in the Nafīsī edition), although the pagination is continuous.

(sg. *maqālāt*) of which it is composed is represented with more or less extensive extracts. The epilogue has been omitted, but the prologue has been translated in full. As is clear from the latter, the seven ‘discourses’ are to be regarded as the most important Sources (*aṣḥḥā*) of divine Knowledge (*‘ilm*)—or *Gnosis*—which this book proposes to ‘unveil’. The first discourse or Source, then, on *tawḥīd*, is essentially theological; it presents the radically apophatic or negative theology of classical Ismailism, as opposed to any attempt by the ‘Lords of Perdition’—that is, ordinary theologians—to define and thereby to reify the absolutely transcendent, unknowable God. By contrast, the remaining six chapters are on what is said to be knowable in the introduction, that is to say, the angelic beings—meaning, most probably, the spiritual ‘Ranks’ (*ḥudūd*) repeatedly mentioned in our text, including Intellect, Soul, Prophets, Imams, and ‘Proofs’ (*ḥujjatān*)<sup>1</sup>—and the ‘degrees of creation’. These six ‘discourses’ (i.e., chapters II. to VII.) constitute by themselves a kind of a hexaemeron, from the First Creation to the Sixth Creation. The first three Creations—or, better, stages of one creative process—are, respectively, Intellect, Soul, and Nature, thus following the standard Neoplatonic model, whereas the three remaining stages of the same process lead us again upwards, as it were. Thus, chapter five, concerning the Fourth Creation, deals with the obvious element of regularity in Nature: the species. Not unlike Suhrawardī in his ‘oriental’ philosophy, our text insists particularly on the species being for-ever preserved, because they are the earthly manifestations of celestial Forms—that is, the stars. This leads quite naturally to the discussion of a very special ‘species’ in chapter six, namely, the Prophets, who thus constitute the Fifth Creation. As is well known, the classical Ismaili conception of sacred history is based on a pattern of six prophetic Enunciators (*nāṭiq*), each of whom is the inaugurator of a new Cycle (*dawr*), each Cycle being introduced in turn by a Legatee (*waṣī*) or ‘Foundation’ (*asās*, i.e., ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in the case of the sixth prophetic Cycle) and brought to completion by seven Imams. The seventh Imam of each Cycle is understood to be or to become the next *nāṭiq*. This means that the seventh Imam of the sixth prophetic Cycle, concretely Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Ja‘far al-Šādiq, should be identical with the seventh *nāṭiq*, and as such should actually be identical with

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1. According to *Wellsprings* Para. 185, ‘Angels’ designates the ‘spiritual support’ (*ta’yīd*) received by Prophets from Intellect, while ‘Fairies’ (*al-jinn*) refers to the benefits they receive from Soul. However, according to the *Sharḥ-i Qaṣīda-yi Abū’l Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Persian text p. 35, ‘Angels’ (*firishta*) means Prophets, Legatees, and Imams, i.e., ‘all those who receive Knowledge through spiritual support (*ta’yīd*) and pass it on to others through spiritual support’, whereas ‘Fairies’ (*parī*) means the ‘Proofs’ (*ḥujjatān*), i.e. ‘all those who receive Knowledge through spiritual support but can only pass it on to others through teaching (*ta’līm*)’, and ordinary humans (*ādami*) are ‘all those who receive it and pass it on through teaching’. Our text frequently mentions the same hierarchy, from the Prophets to the ‘Proofs’; the latter rank is identical with *dā’ī* and *ma’dhūn* according to the *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, 105. Like their ‘Adversaries’; these receivers of *ta’yīd* are ‘called to arise’ in every ‘Cycle’. Cf. III. 6.3.; V. 5.4. and especially VII. 5.2. On *ta’yīd* or ‘spiritual support’ cf. II. 4.2.; III. 6.3.; III. 7.4.; VI. 1.3.; VI. 7.1.

the *qā'im*, called in our text the 'Lord of the Final Rising' (*khudāwand-i qiyāmat* or *khudāwand-i rastakhīz*), the one who inaugurates the ultimate Cycle of Unveiling (*dawr-i kashf*). But this original conception evidently had to be adjusted in the course of time, so that the *parousia* (*zuhūr*) of this messianic figure—not necessarily the 'return' of the same historical Imam—could still be expected, and our text (VI. 7. 4.) seems indeed to reflect such an adjustment since it makes it very clear that the great 'Cycle of Concealment' (*dawr-i satr*) before the Cycle of Unveiling consists itself of seven, not six, cycles (*haft dawr*).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is hardly a matter of mere coincidence that this topic has been dealt with exclusively in the seventh subchapter—the final one—of chapter six. Indeed it should be noted that each of the seven chapters of the *Unveiling of the Hidden* is itself composed of exactly seven subchapters, titled each time by what I read as *jastār* rather than *justār* and have, accordingly, translated as 'Issue' rather than 'Inquiry'. In other words, each of the Seven Sources emerges itself in seven Issues or 'outpourings', just as according to Sijistānī's *Wellsprings*,<sup>2</sup> the seven Imams are said to emerge or to 'arise' (*inbi'āth*) each time from the six prophetic Enunciators prior to the *qā'im*. This reading of *jastār* not only goes well with Sijistānī's general concept of 'sources', which is the basic notion of his *Wellsprings*, it also seems to be confirmed by the occurrence of what can in my view only be read as *jastār* in our text itself (II. 6.1.), as well as by the frequent usage of verbs like *furū-chakīdan* or *furū-rikhtan* as applied to the 'outpourings' of the Light of the Prime Intellect on everything in existence.

It is, perhaps, not so surprising, then, that chapter seven, concerning the Sixth Creation, should be devoted exclusively to a particular notion of what is usually translated as 'resurrection' (*ba'ṭh*), a term which is consistently rendered in our Persian version by the verbal form *bar-angīkhtan* (to rouse, stir, kindle) and translated here, depending on the context, as 'calling to arise', or 'resuscitation', and the like. As was shown by Wilferd Madelung,<sup>3</sup> *ba'ṭh* in Sijistānī's usage of the term is neither identical with *qiyāmah*, which refers specifically to the final Rising of the *qā'im*, nor does it convey the idea of resurrection of the dead bodies in the sense in which the term is normally understood in Islamic theology. Rather, it constitutes a radical critique of the latter, referring instead, as it clearly does in at least three of Sijistānī's works—the *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, the *Risālat al-bāhirah*, and the *Kashf al-mahjūb*, to a peculiar notion of transmigration of the soul. According to our text—*Kashf al-mahjūb*—this is to be understood as a continuous re-creation both within various stages of one and the same life (VII. 4.) and over many cycles to come (VII. 5.–7.), until this process converges with the final Rising of the *qā'im*. Right

1. See above, p. 74, note 2, and below, the note ad loc.

2. Para. 158.

3. 'Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and Metempsychosis', in *Iranica Varia: Papers in Honour of Professor Ehsan Yarshater* (Leiden, 1990), pp. 131–143.

from the beginning of chapter seven, *ba'th* or *bar-angikhtan* is defined as being the equivalent of 'calling into existence' (*būdan kardan*) and explained as a process which originates from the very first arising or awakening, namely, the arising of Soul due to Intellect's contemplating Itself, and propagates itself to everything that thereby *exists*—most notably the individual soul or life itself (VII. 2.–3.) but also the Knowledge (or *Gnosis*) that is 'called to arise' in the soul of the right kind of student through the right kind of teacher (VII. 4.–6.). The process of *ba'th* or *bar-angikhtan* of individual souls and their gnostic potential runs parallel to the major 'historical' process this book is all about: the 'Coming down of Soul in the Form of Man (*ṣūrat-i mardum*)' (III. 1.)<sup>1</sup> which is enacted in stages over the seven cycles, or brought from the stage of potentiality to the stage of actuality, through the mission (also called *ba'th* in Arabic!) of the prophetic Enunciators from Adam to the *qā'im* (chapter VI.). This recurrent prophetic figure is an extraordinary 'Sage of such penetrating Knowledge and Wisdom that nobody can rival him' (V. 5.4.; cf. V. 5.1.). Yet, while the ultimate Teacher is evidently the *qā'im* or the 'Lord of the final Rising', and identical with the *mahdī* who 'guides the humans to that which is in their own inner reality (*ḥaqīqat-i īshān*) ... and opens the way for the souls to know the spiritual dominion of God, so that the souls become one with the True Realities (*ḥaqāyiq*) and the Spiritual Support (*ta'yīd*)' (VI. 7. 1.), it seems nevertheless that the 'learning process' of certain individual souls may anticipate this Final Rising in a 'moving onward in the stages of Soul ... so that Soul will have come down in perfect completeness' (III. 1.2.; cf. VII. 4.1.). In fact, even ordinary sense-perception, imagination, and rational knowledge are seen as part of a spiritual and eschatological process leading up to the highest stage (cf. II. 4.; III. 4.; III. 5.; III. 6.)—a most interesting aspect of our text, which calls to mind the kind of dynamic eschatology that was systematically elaborated much later by the great Shi'i philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī on the basis of his concept of 'substantial motion'. Perhaps, then, *bar-angikhtan* means indeed some sort of an 'alchemical' process, as was suggested by Corbin,<sup>2</sup>—but an individual as well as universal process which is, moreover, never 'stripped of the human form'.<sup>3</sup> Sijistānī may well have thought this process to condition or even to cause the Rising of the *qā'im* as the Pure Soul (*al-naḥs al-zakiyyah*) in the most perfect human body. Although this conclusion is not explicitly stated in our text, it can certainly be supported on the basis of other

1. Cf. *al-ṣūrat al-insāniyyah*, *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, 96, line 2. Ibid., 78, Sijistānī argues against the 'Philosophers' that 'resurrection' cannot possibly take place 'in a substance whose parts are stripped of the human form'. Note that a tradition from the Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq has it that 'The human form (*al-ṣūrat al-insāniyyah*) is the greatest Proof of God to His creatures' (quoted by Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Jāmi' al-asrār*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahyā [Tehran and Paris, 1969], Arabic text Para. 765).

2. *Kashf al-mahjūb*, introd. 17f.

3. See above, note 1.

extant Sijistānian works, notably the *Risālat al-bāhirah*,<sup>1</sup> as well as from a crucial passage in the *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, where the individual souls that are 'adjoined' (read *tujāwiru*) to many individual bodies over long periods of time are said to be the 'vessels' (*marākib*) of the Pure Soul (*al-naḥs al-zakiyyah*), and indeed the 'means' (*sabab*) for its powerful appearance in a 'harmonious individual' (*shakhṣ mu'tadil*) at the final stage of the universal process of prophetic mission (*amr al-risālah*).<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted, however, that Sijistānī seems to have been somewhat hesitant as to whether this eschatological scene is to be envisioned as taking place on this earth exclusively, albeit on a spiritually empowered Earth which is the land of the divine promise of justice, as is strongly suggested by our text (cf. IV. 4. 1.–2.), or whether it is as purely 'spiritual forms' (*ṣuwar khafiyyah*) that the individual souls are 'called to arise' through the appearance of the *qā'im*, as is clearly stated in the *Wellsprings*.<sup>3</sup> Quite generally speaking, there is a marked difference in outlook between the *Wellsprings* with its emphasis on a separate, independent existence of Intellect and the spiritual world,<sup>4</sup> and the *Kashf al-mahjūb* which stresses, on the contrary, a direct involvement of Intellect in the world as it exists (e.g. II. 3. 1.–2.).

Given the *horror transmigrationis* characteristic of monotheistic 'orthodoxies' in general, including that of the official Fatimid *da'wah*, and no doubt also in view of the latter's sustained efforts under al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (reg. 386/996–411/1021) to stay clear of their own *ghulāt*,<sup>5</sup> it is hardly surprising that Nāṣir-i Khusraw, although generally an admirer of the works of our author, should have condemned the *Kashf al-mahjūb* (as well as the *Risālat al-bāhirah* and the nonextant *Sūs al-baqā*) for advocating the by now completely unacceptable doctrine of *tanāsukh*.<sup>6</sup> It is true that our text itself condemns *tanāsukh* explicitly in two passages (V. 3. 3. and VII. 3. 2.). However, this warning concerns specifically a 'vulgar' kind of transmigrationism, in particular the one implying a change of species, which is totally ruled out because of our thinker's insistence on the 'preservation of the species'. But the same argument also implies that transmigration within the same species is, precisely, *not* ruled out. As was already noted by S. Pines,<sup>7</sup> this fine point did not escape the sharp eye of Bīrūnī, who mentions in his *India* that 'in a book of his

1. Ed. with an introduction by Boustan Hirji, 'Taṣḥīḥ-i intiqādi-i *al-Risālat al-bāhirah*, *Tahqīqāt-i Islāmī*, 7 (1992), pp. 21–50, where the use of the notion *istishfāf*, 'rendering transparent', is particularly noteworthy.

2. *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, ed. M. Ghālib, p. 64; MS. Tübingen Ma VI 294, p. 106.

3. Para. 165.

4. Eg. Paras 24 and 53–56.

5. Cf. Daniel Peterson, 'Cosmogony and the Ten Separated Intellects' in the '*Rāḥat al-'Aql* of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1990, chapter four.

6. *Khawān al-ikhwān*, ed. 'A. Qawīm (Tehran, 1338), pp. 131ff., 135, 139 (chapters 42 and 43); *Zād al-musāfirīn*, ed. Badhl al-Rahmān (Berlin, 1341/1923), p. 421f.

7. 'La longue récession de la théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne', *REI*, 22 (1954), p. 16.

which he called *Kashf al-mahjūb*, Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijzī ... propounded a doctrine according to which the species are preserved and *tanāsukh* proceeds within each species only, without passing to any other.’<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that such a peculiar form of ‘transmigrationism’ within the same species only was by no means a thing unheard of in the Islamic world of the time around 400/1000. Ibn Sīnā in his *Risālah al-adḥawiyyah*<sup>2</sup> as well as Ibn Ḥazm in his *Fīṣal*<sup>3</sup> distinguish among the ‘transmigrationists,’ a special group whose distinctive mark was that they did not accept the transfer of the human soul to any species other than human (as Ibn Sīnā puts it) or, more generally, the transfer of a soul to any species other than the one it left (as Ibn Ḥazm puts it). Nāṣir-i Khusraw, too, was not only aware of this distinct ‘group’ among the ‘transmigrationists’; he in fact identified it correctly as a Neoplatonic tradition, as distinct from the generalized transmigration across the species, attributed to Plato. For in chapter 43 of his *Khawān al-ikhwān*, after giving us a brief description of ‘Platonic transmigrationism,’ Nāṣir adds the following, most revealing quotation from the *De Natura Hominis* of Nemesios of Emesa, which he apparently attributes to Porphyry: ‘It is related from Porphyry that in the book *Ṭabī‘at al-insān*, regarding the Greeks, he said that they say that the soul is of many species (*gūnahā*), just as the body (*shakhṣ*) is of many species, and every species of souls goes into the species of its own bodies. Thus, the soul of man goes only into human bodies, and that of horses only into horses, and by analogy, every soul goes [only] into a body which is suitable for it.’<sup>4</sup> What is somewhat surprising, then, about Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s reports on the *Kashf al-mahjūb* is not the fact that he judged it to be transmigrationist, which it is obviously enough, but that he failed to draw our attention to the above distinction when speaking about this work, and in effect blurred it by ranging Sijistānī among the Platonists in chapter 42 of his *Khawān al-ikhwān*,<sup>5</sup> even though he must have known better.

1. *Kitāb al-Birūnī fī taḥqīq mā li’l-Hind min maqūlah maqbūlah fi’l-‘aql aw mardhūlah* (Hyderabad, 1377/1958), 49. Alberuni’s *India*, tr. Sachau, vol. 1, p. 64f.

2. Ed. Ḥasan ‘Aṣī (Beirut 1404/1984), p. 95. Moreover, Ibn Sīnā (ibid., 120) points out that those who hold this special kind of limited transmigrationism argue on the basis of Aristotle’s *De Anima*, from which he also quotes the relevant passage (cf. *De Anima* 407b, 22 and 414a, 22).

3. *Al-Fīṣal fi’l-milal wa’l-ahwā’ wa’l-niḥal* (Cairo, 1321), p. 91.

4. *Khawān al-ikhwān*, p. 138. This corresponds (with a few omissions) to Nemesius Emesenus, *De Natura Hominis Graece et Latine* (Hildesheim, 1967), p. 115, line 4 to 116, line 2. The doctrine under discussion was held in particular by Iamblichus, who was therefore praised by Nemesius, as Porphyry was praised by Augustinus for similar reasons: both distinguished themselves thereby from ‘Platonic’ (and Plotinian) generalized transmigration of the human soul to animals. Cf. Heinrich Dörrie, ‘Kontroversen um die Seelenwanderung im kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus,’ *Hermes (Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie)*, 85 (1957), pp. 414–435, esp. 422–429. What remains unclear, however, is Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s direct source. The known Arabic version of *De Natura Hominis* attributes it neither to Nemesius nor to Porphyry, but to Gregory of Nyssa. Cf. Moreno Morani, *La tradizione manoscritta del ‘De natura hominis’ di Nemesio* (Milan, 1981), pp. 90–100.

5. *Khawān al-ikhwān*, p. 135. Note, however, that in *Zād*, p. 421, he associates him vaguely with Indian transmigrationism.



In any case, Nāṣir-i Khusraw's somewhat confusing condemnation of the *Kashf al-maḥjūb* constitutes rather good evidence for the authenticity of our Persian version, which amounts to virtual certainty when combined with Bīrūnī's clarification. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the two references found in an extract from Abū'l-Qāsim al-Bustī's *Kashf asrār al-bāṭiniyyah wa ghawār madhabihim*, which has been the subject of a substantial article by S. M. Stern.<sup>1</sup> This Arabic text contains a theological critique of two propositions that Sijistānī allegedly made in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, but which are not found in our Persian version. For Stern, this was sufficient evidence to conclude that the latter 'must therefore be assumed not to reproduce the original text in full'.<sup>2</sup> Now, while this remains, of course, a possibility, it would seem at least equally legitimate *a priori* to assume on the contrary that it was Bustī who did not reproduce in full whatever original text he referred to, especially as his 'quotations' are clearly adduced with the sole intention of having Sijistānī contradict himself. Moreover, it may be ventured here that Bustī (or his informer, or his transcriber) simply confused the titles of the two Sijistānian works he had some knowledge of: *Kashf al-maḥjūb* and *Kitāb al-yanābī'*; for there are a number of indications pointing to the conclusion that this is precisely what has happened in fact. To begin with, even the title of the *Kitāb al-yanābī'* is quoted in garbled form in this text (see Stern, *ibid.*), and Bustī's claim that in this book, Sijistānī maintained 'that the *ajrām* are the cause of the *mufradāt*' (as cited by P. Walker)<sup>3</sup> hardly fits anything in the extant *Kitāb al-yanābī'*, not even Para. 56—pace Walker—but could easily be understood as a reference to the doctrine that the celestial bodies preserve the species, which is indeed strongly maintained in our text in several places of chapter five (cf. V. 1.–3.; V. 3. 4.). More important, what seems not to have been noticed is the fact that the two critical points allegedly made in the original *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, namely, (1) that Intellect, Joy (*surūr*), Sadness (*ghamm*, *sic*), and 'Bliss' (*ghibṭah*, *sic*) were 'actualized simultaneously' (*kulluhā ma'an ḥaṣalat*), while Intellect is 'according to him the first of all things, nothing prior to it being knowable', and (2) that 'all we can know is the First and the Second [i.e., Intellect and Soul] ... because we cannot pass beyond our world', are recognizable if incomplete and rather distorted references to parts of what Sijistānī explains in great detail in a coherent block ranging over Sources 14, 15, and 16 of the *Wellsprings*.<sup>4</sup> This

1. 'Abū'l-Qāsim al-Bustī and his Refutation of Ismailism', JRAS (1961), pp. 14–35; repr. in S. M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismailism* (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1983), pp. 299–320.

2. Stern, *ibid.*, p. 22 [reprint, p. 307], where the relevant Arabic passage is given in full.

3. *Wellsprings*, p. 143 (commentary Para. 56).

4. Paras 70–84. For the 'seven powers of the Intellect', see the discussions in Corbin and Walker, *ad loc.* Also see now the recent article by W. Madelung, 'Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī and the Seven Faculties of the Intellect', in F. Daftary, ed., *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 85–89. Note that by mentioning *ghibṭah*, Bustī adds another candidate to the controversial *ghaybah/ghunyah*!

being the case, it would seem rather unnecessary for Sijistānī to repeat these details again in his *Kashf al-mahjūb*, although it is true that one might expect him to enumerate some of the ‘powers of the Intellect’ mentioned in III. 1.3. or to explain the ‘attributes’ of the Intellect which are only globally referred to in I. 3.1. and I. 3.2. Nor would the Persian translator—whoever he was—have had any reason to be ‘prudent’ about the two issues criticized by Bustī had they really been discussed in any detail in the original *Kashf al-mahjūb*, for all these *theologoumena* are reproduced in full by Nāṣir-i Khusraw in his Persian paraphrase of the *Wellsprings*,<sup>1</sup> and the ‘seven powers of the Intellect’ are also discussed, as is well known, in his *Jāmi‘ al-ḥikmatayn* and in the *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Abu’l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*. Finally, had Bustī really seen a copy of the original *Kashf al-mahjūb* and read all of it, it would be more than surprising that he did not take the author to task for transmigrationism, whereas if what he quoted, perhaps from memory, was in reality the *Wellsprings*, this omission on his part is perfectly explainable since that work seems indeed free from this particular ‘heresy’.

To conclude, the Persian version of the *Kashf al-mahjūb* is certainly not an arbitrary compilation of selected thoughts, but a well-structured book that follows a clear plan. While it cannot be ruled out that the anonymous Persian translator of the fifth/eleventh century may occasionally have imposed his own understanding, or that the compiler of the unique Taqawī manuscript simply made a mistake here and there, as will be discussed in the notes to the translation,<sup>2</sup> this work is in all likelihood a complete and, in substance, a faithful rendering of the lost original.

Hermann Landolt

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1. *Wellsprings* Source 14 = *Khawān al-Ikhwān* chapter 12: W. S. 15 = Kh. ch. 82: W. S. 16 = Kh. ch. 60.

2. Specifically, the notes ad II. 2. 1.; II. 4. 3.; III. 1. 2.; III. 1. 3.; III. 7. 3.; V. 1. 3.; V. 5. 1.; VI. 6. 1.; VII. 3. 1. If in these cases no MS. variant is mentioned, it means that both MS. Cairo and MS. Tehran agree with the edited text. This translation is based on Abū Ya‘qūb Sijistānī’s *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. H. Corbin.

## UNVEILING OF THE HIDDEN

Translated for this volume by Hermann Landolt from Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. H. Corbin (Paris-Tehran, 1949), pp. 2–96

## [Prologue]

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, from Him we seek Help!*

Be aware that the realities of True Knowledge (*ḥaqāyiq-i 'ilm*) are hidden from Iblis and his progeny, while they are manifest with God's Friends (*awliyā'-i khudāy*) and His Chosen ones (*guzīdagān-i 'ū*). For that is the secret of God, which He makes known to whom He wishes among His Friends. True<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is in His treasure-house, [access] to which He grants to whomever He wants among His Servants. Those debarred from it stray in perdition and wander in blindness. On their hearts are locks which cannot be opened, and on their intellects are chains which cannot be lifted. The Friends of God graze in the pastures of Paradise, picking fruits from its trees without being ever sated and swimming in its rivers without ever tiring. They have recognized the One whom they worship, holding Him separate and pure from the traits of the creatures and keeping Him aloof from all their attributes. The Lords of Perdition have likened the Creator to the creatures, confined Him within definition, and pictured Him with attributes to the point of numbering them! Indeed they have become incapable of recognizing the angels (*firishtagān*)<sup>2</sup> and the degrees of creation, ignoring established knowledge and believing in unfounded assertions; whereas the Lords of the True Realities are cognizant of God's angels and possessed of the science of the degrees of creation. They do not recognize the unknowable, but they know the knowable, and place their hope in that which may come to be, [namely], that the angels will descend upon them. For the Friends of God there is no pain in preserving True Knowledge in such a way that the sciences of the True Reading (*'ulūm-i ta'wīl*)<sup>3</sup> become patterns engraved on their spiritual souls and will be of the essence of the substance of their Soul. Indeed, whatever belongs to the essence of a substance is never severed from it, as with the motion of fire which is not separable from fire.

1. The adjective 'True' has sometimes been added to 'Knowledge' in this translation. As often in Ismaili texts, *'ilm* means definitely more than just 'knowledge'; it corresponds to the special kind of salvatory 'Knowledge' which is known as Gnosis. It does not, however, imply—at least not in our text—the rejection of the material world generally associated with Gnosticism.

2. Perhaps meaning the imams. See Introd. p. 76, n. 1..

3. Much has been written about *ta'wīl*, one of the cornerstones of Ismailism and Shi'ism in general. For Sijistānī in particular, see Anton M. Heinen, 'The Notion of *ta'wīl* in Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's Book of the Sources (*Kitāb al-yanābī*)', *Hamdard Islamicus*, 2 (1979), pp. 35–45; and Jean-François Gagnon, 'Gnose et philosophie: une étude du *ta'wīl* ismaélien d'après le *Livre des Sources* d'al-Sijistānī'. Unpublished thesis, McGill University, 1995.

May God preserve us and you from the yokes and fetters of non-cognition and ignorance, and may He allow us and you apprehension of the true realities and search for the growth of True Knowledge, which is the 'Heaven of Refuge'<sup>1</sup> and the 'Highest Paradise'! May He keep us on the 'Straight Path'!<sup>2</sup> Indeed He is ever-generous and noble, the Possessor of abundant grace.

Now, by virtue of the shining Light and the great Power coming from the Friend of God<sup>3</sup> on this 'Earth of Convocation' (*zamīn-i da'wat*),<sup>4</sup> which is the home of the spiritual souls, and by the blessing of my obedience to him and of his kindness to me, I shall undertake to unveil those secrets which were sealed, symbols which were kept in the treasure-house. No one has transcribed this [heavenly] Word into [earthly] script. These are verbal expressions and spiritual symbols which should work as a cure for the people of our time and adequately provide that for which there is a need. I shall unveil [them] in this book based on seven principal sources (*aṣl*), which are the most important of all:

- I. On assertion of the One
- II. On the First Originated
- III. On the Second Creation
- IV. On the Third Creation
- V. On the Fourth Creation
- VI. On the Fifth Creation
- VII. On the Sixth Creation

### Discourse One: On Assertion of the One

#### *Issue One: On eliminating thingness<sup>5</sup> from the Creator*

##### I. 1.1.

The notion of being a 'thing' should be eliminated from the Creator, as this is properly that by which creatures are designated and through which they can be

1. Cf. Qur'ān 32:19.

2. Cf. Qur'ān 1:6.

3. Perhaps meaning the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz (reg. 341/953–365/975). Cf. Intro.

4. On the significance of the 'Earth of Convocation' see below, IV. 4. 1.–2.

5. *Chizī*, the abstract form of *chīz*, is the Persian equivalent of the Arabic *shay'yyah*, 'thingness', a technical term of *Kalām*, which is sometimes also used for the philosophical notion of 'essence' or 'quiddity'; see Jean Jolivet, 'Aux origines de l'ontologie d'Ibn Sīnā', in Jean Jolivet and Rushdī Rāshed, ed., *Études sur Avicenne* (Paris, 1984), pp. 11–28, as indeed it is used later in our own text (see II. 2. 1. and the note ad loc.). In the present *Kalām* context, however, I have preferred to translate *chizī* literally as 'thingness', as does De Smet (*Quiétude*, p. 90). A 'thing', according to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, is a knowable entity (*Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, ed. H. Corbin and M. Mu'in [Tehran and Paris, 1332/1953], Persian text para. 89). The position of our author, namely, that God is neither 'thing' nor 'not-thing' (cf. 1. 7. 1.–2.) is exactly what distinguishes Ismaili doctrine according to a

distinguished from each other, for every thing preserves the form of its respective species in order for the soul to be enabled to tell the colours<sup>1</sup> of the spiritual [lit. ‘subtle’] world. Now, which thing, whose [specific] form would be neither of Soul, nor of Nature, nor of Art, would be suitable for God? Such is far from Him by virtue of the majesty (*buzurgwārī*) of His power and the pervasiveness (*rawā’ī*) of His sovereignty. Indeed, God’s majesty is beyond taking the name of a thing, whatever thing that may be. It is improper to attribute thingness to Him or to link him with thingness—except by establishing His transcendent Essence (*dhāt-i buzurgwār-i ‘ū*) beyond all the things by which creatures are designated.

## I. 1.2.

Further, all men believe that ‘God was while no thing was’,<sup>2</sup> and they have commonly agreed that God is not like<sup>3</sup> His own deed [i.e., The Creation]. But a ‘thing’ cannot escape being either a substance or a body or an accident or motion or rest, whereas God is beyond coming under any of these divisions, so that [it can truly be said that] neither is creature like the Creator, nor the Creator like creature. If God were a ‘thing’, and had brought forth ‘things’, He would [himself] be a [thing] ‘come forth’ since ‘things’ come forth by way of generation (*bi-naw‘-i tawlid*). Therefore, since you have ruled that ‘No one was generated from Him, nor He from any one’,<sup>4</sup> now [you also must accept that] ‘thing’ and ‘thingness’ are eliminated from God, and that ‘thingness’ is attributed to creature. Understand this!

## I. 1.3.

Further, if attribution of ‘thingness’ to God were admissible, it would become necessary to say that ‘one thing is the Creator’ and ‘one thing is the creature’. But these ‘things’ are either substance or accident, and substance is either body or spirit, and body is either animate or inanimate, and animate is either vegetal or animal. Now, coming back to the division of [the thing supposed to refer to] the Creator, what shall we say? Which one among these divisions would apply to the Creator? Clearly the Creator does not come under these divisions, nor does any non-divided [i.e., not subsumed] division apply to Him. No, He is [absolutely] alone and beyond being susceptible of our attributing to Him things either spiritual or corporeal, [all of] which are multiple. Since we have from the start asserted His being beyond, it necessarily follows that God does not come under the division of the creatures,

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well-informed Zaydī doxographer of the 6th/12th century, Nashwān b. Sa‘īd al-Himyārī, *Sharḥ risālat al-ḥūr al-‘īn*, ed. Kamāl Muṣṭafā (Cairo 1367/1947), p. 148.

1. The ‘colours’ of the spiritual world are a frequent theme with Sijistānī; cf. IV. 6.1. and VI. 6.1.; also *Wellsprings*, para. 14.

2. Persian translation of well-known ḥadīth (*kāna Allāhu wa lam yakun ma‘ahū shay’*), which Sijistānī evidently quotes here because of the word ‘thing’.

3. Reading *namānad* p. 4, line 14 (with both MSS. Cairo and Tehran).

4. Cf. Qur’ān 112:3.

which may well be thought to be many or few, and since this is so, they are divisible, and every divisible is defined, and every defined is finite, and every finite is created; for every created there is the necessity of the Creator. Thus, God is the Creator, and there is for us the necessity to recognize His absolute sovereignty (*kibriyā'i wa 'aẓamat-i 'ū*) so that the assertion of His Oneness be far beyond [implying] the attributes of the creatures whether corporeal or spiritual. Understand this!

*Issue Three: On eliminating attributes from the Creator*

I. 3.1.

All attributes are found to exist either in substances or as adjoined to bodies or souls. As for those [attributes] that exist in the absolute substance (*jawhar-i muṭlaq*), that is, in the Intellect, they are, like the latter, directly originated through origination (*ibdā'*) from the Originator and caused through causation from a causing agent (*'āll*).<sup>1</sup> And causedness and originatedness (*mubda'i*) are the attribute of the Prime Intellect, who is the one created primarily, not out of a thing. And whatever attribute qualifies the primarily created or all other creatures is far removed from the Creator.

As for those [attributes] that exist in bodies, they are external qualifications such as the colours, the odours, the savours, warmth and coldness, softness and hardness.

As for those that exist in the soul, they are internal qualifications such as knowledge and ignorance, courage and cowardice, generosity and meanness, gentleness and intemperance. Now the Creator is far beyond whatever attribute qualifies the First Substance [i.e., Intellect] and the Second Substance [i.e., Soul] and the composed bodies and the [individual] souls; [He transcends all this] in every respect and by all means. Understand this!

I. 3.2.

Further, the attributes qualifying a thing result from something other than that thing, for, the beings pertaining to the realm of natural generation (*mawālīd*) take their attributes from the elements, under active influence of the celestial bodies; the elements and the [celestial] bodies receive their attributes from Nature; Nature from Soul; Soul from Intellect; and Intellect from the [creative] Word (*kalimah*) and

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1. Strictly speaking, the causing agent is not God or 'the Originator' himself, but 'the Origination' (*ibdā' = hast kardan = amr*); see II. 2.2. and II. 5.2.; also *Wellsprings*, paras 24–25 and 40 (*al-'illat al-ūlā = al-amr = al-kalimah*). This ultimate Cause is also identical with 'Oneness' (II. 2. 1.–3.). As for Intellect as 'absolute Substance', see also I. 6.2. and II. 7.1.; cf. *Wellsprings*, para. 55. See also Shigeru Kamada, 'The First Being: Intellect (*'aql/khirad*) as the link between God's Command and Creation according to Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī', *The Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture*, 106 (1988), pp. 1–33.

the Origination by the Originator, who has no attribute whatsoever. For example, sweetness, the attribute of anything sweet, is adjoined to a sweet thing because of the right proportion of warmth; bitterness, the attribute of anything bitter, is adjoined to a bitter thing because of excessive warmth; acidity, the attribute of anything sour, is adjoined to a sour thing because of a lack of warmth. Similarly, the attributes of Soul, which are invisible and internal, are adjoined to the Soul due to its receiving instruction from the Intellect, and they leave it [again] due to its compliance with Nature—but this concerns [only] the individual souls.<sup>1</sup> Also consider the intellectual attributes, which are adjoined to the First-Originated (*mubda'-i awwal*) due to the Origination and the [creative] Word.<sup>2</sup> And the Creator is far beyond the attributes of Intellect, Soul and Body... .

*Issue Five: On eliminating time from the Creator*

I. 5.4.

Further, time is caused by the motion of the sphere, and the motion of the sphere is the cause of time. Whatever is a necessary concomitant of the motion of the sphere—which is the cause of time—is also a necessary concomitant of every moving object, [whether it be moving] in terms of generation or corruption, increase or decrease, or transportation from one place to another, and [all this] is not in God, for these are attributes of natural things, and God is alone and far from being susceptible of being linked with attributes, whether corporeal or spiritual. As for the time that you attribute to God, [it is to be understood] in the sense that He is the Originator (*mubdi'*) of time and the Originator of things both non-composed and composed. As for the imaginal time (*zamān-i wahmī*) from which the natural motions keep coming forth, this is the [lower] limit of the activity of the Soul, for it is through its [respective] imaginal motion (*ḥarakat-i wahmī*) that the universal Soul receives the light of the oneness of God (*nūr-i waḥdat-i īzād*), and it is through it [i.e., the imaginal motion of the universal Soul] that natural time and motion subsist [or: 'arise', *bidū qā'im ast*].<sup>3</sup> Therefore, since imaginal motion, which is the cause of all motions, is related to Soul, and [since] universal Intellect, which is the Prime Originated (*mubda'-i awwal*), is far beyond that motion, how could it be admissible to attribute motion—which is the cause of time—or time—which is

1. Cf. I. 6. 1. and II. 7. 3. (Not translated here).

2. This is probably an allusion to the 'seven powers of Intellect' Sijistānī discusses in the *Wellsprings*. See Introd. p. 81, n. 5..

3. Cf. *Wellsprings* Para. 122, where imaginal motion (*al-ḥarakat al-wahmiyyah*), produced by the activity of the Soul, causes the manifestation of matter combined with form (or Nature). The Soul itself originates in no time as a result of Intellect's contemplation, and is as such capable of receiving its benefits from the Intellect. Also see Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Khwān al-ikhwān* chapters 21 and 62 (ed. Qawīm, pp. 67, 70, and 185). The Neoplatonic tradition (Iamblichus, Proclus) has an 'intelligible time' between eternity and physical time.

caused by motion—to the Creator? Thus, time cannot be attributed to the Creator in any way whatsoever. Understand this!

*Issue Six: On eliminating 'being' from the Creator*

I. 6.1.

'Being' is attributed to beings either because [their domain] can be conceived as not-being, or because one thinks of a thing above it, which has dominated it.

As for the things which it is possible to conceive as not-being, they are those below Intellect, that is to say, those beings which turn into not-being and are under Nature.

As for that which is above things, dominating them by the Command of God, it is the Prime Intellect. And that Form which is deposited in it, is the Form of Man (*ṣūrat-i mardum*), which is stable in its own state, [although] it may happen that it inclines to Nature, worships it and becomes submissive to it.<sup>1</sup>

I. 6.2.

Be aware that the division here is into three categories:

[a] One is a substance, which is neither being dominated nor becoming not-being. That is the Prime Intellect, which due to the Command of God is the noblest of all creatures.

[b] One is both being dominated and becoming not-being. That is the form of the natural beings pertaining to the realm of generation (*mawālīd-i ṭabīʿī*) and the external form of the religious laws (*ẓāhir-i sharīʿathā*).

[c] One is being dominated but not becoming not-being. That is the noble Form of Man, which came forth from the permanent substance, that is, the light of the world of Intellect. These [three categories of] beings are remote from the Creator, because He is the Maker-of-Being of the beings, as all beings came forth by virtue of His Command. Therefore, since 'being' is applicable to that which may be imagined as not-being, or to that which is dominated and forced by one dominant and powerful [i.e., the Intellect] above it, it is necessary to eliminate 'being' from God in every respect. Thus, it has been verified that to attribute 'being' to God is impudent, because the beings all became 'being' through His Command.

I. 6.3.

Further, he who criticizes us for eliminating 'absolute being' (*ḥastī-yi muṭlaq*) from God, while he himself eliminates the differentiated beings from God, [should consider this]: Once you subsume the differentiated beings [under a class], the result is 'absolute being'. Indeed our adversary eliminates from God the being of the celestial

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1. Cf. I. 3.2.



spheres and the being of the stars and the being of the elements and the being of the realm of generation and the being of the bodies, substances and accidents, and the being of motions and rest, and every being that you may find among the creatures, all of them our adversary eliminates from God. Now, since [all this] differentiated 'being' may be subsumed under 'Absolute Being', it is necessary to eliminate both 'absolute being' and differentiated being from the Creator, so that God is far beyond both being and not-being, in every respect. Understand this!

I. 6.4.

Know that the attribution of 'being' to God is bound to come under one of two alternatives: Either He has no need for 'being', [in which case] it is redundant. And if 'being' is redundant because the Maker-of-Being has no need for it, then why blame us for eliminating that which He does not need? Or, [on the contrary] it is the case that the Maker-of-Being has Himself no existence except through being. [But in that case,] what difference<sup>1</sup> would there be between the Maker-of-Being and the Made-to-Be? On what grounds would it then not be admissible that the Maker-of-Being equals the Made-to-Be and the Made-to-Be, likewise, the Maker-of-Being? As a result, there would be ambiguity in our knowledge of the Maker-of-Being, the Creator, whereas we must be able to know the Maker-of-Being [as distinct] from the Made-to-Be. Thus, it is necessary to eliminate 'being' from the Maker-of-Being, the Creator, and to attribute it to the Made-to-Be, the humble servant, for it is the latter who is in need of 'being'. Thus it has been verified that 'being' is not in any way whatsoever a necessary concomitant of the Creator. Understand this!

*Issue Seven: On eliminating anything antithetical to the above by-names from the Creator*

I. 7.1.

If in this issue we have emphasized that the correct assertion of the [idea of the] Creator consists in eliminating the above states of being and attributes from Him, thus saying that He is neither thing nor subject to definition nor subject to qualification nor in place nor in time nor being, and then say that we have correctly asserted it on the grounds that the first elimination (*dūr kardan-i awwal*)—that is to say, of corporeal attributes—from the Creator amounts to correct assertion of transcendent Oneness (*tawhīd-i mujarrad*), this is not necessarily so. Rather, the correct assertion is that which follows [this prior] elimination. The prior elimination (*dūr kardan-i pīshīn*) entails [only] separation from that which marks creatures, while the [subsequent] elimination is the mark of correct assertion of the Creator in such a way that the claim about Him does not amount to [sheer] 'divestment' (*ta'fīl*). Nevertheless, we

1. Reading *faṣl* (Persian text p. 13, line 19), in accordance with MS. Tehran.

say as follows: The Creator is not 'thing' and not 'not-thing'; not subject to definition and not not-subject-to definition; not subject to qualification and not not-subject-to-qualification; not in place and not not-in-place; not in time and not not-in-time; not being and not not-being. As a result, we will have gotten rid of both 'likening' [Him to creatures, *tashbih*] and 'divestment' [of existence, *ta'fil*]. We get rid of 'likening' through the prior elimination (*dūr kardan-i nakhusht*) and of 'divestment' through the subsequent elimination (*dūr kardan-i ākharīn*). Thus it has been verified that [true assertion of] the transcendence of the Creator will not be achieved except by elimination of that which comes in as opposite of these eliminations, that is to say, through both the prior elimination in order to get away from likening and through the subsequent elimination in order to eliminate divestment. Understand this!

## I. 7.2.

On the other hand, if we set the correct assertion of [the idea of] the Creator on one elimination of those things which we have [already] eliminated from Him [i.e., the second elimination only], thus saying that He is not 'not-thing' and not 'not-being', it follows necessarily that He becomes linked with that thing which is 'thing' and 'being'. And if we say that He is not 'not-subject-to-definition' and not 'not-subject-to-qualification' and not 'not-in-time' and not 'not-in-place', this amounts to likening and is no assertion of pure transcendent Oneness, because it implies that He is subject to qualification and subject to definition and in place and in time. Therefore, both the prior elimination [of 'things'] and the subsequent elimination [of 'not-things'] from the Creator are necessary for the pure transcendent Oneness to be [real] and absolute Singleness (*fardāniyyat-i mahḍ*). Understand this!<sup>1</sup>

**Discourse Two: On Bringing to Mind the First Creation [i.e. Intellect]<sup>2</sup>**

*Issue One: In what sense Intellect is the centre of the two worlds<sup>3</sup>*

## II. 1.3.

Further, the centre is that point which is the remotest from all those points that turn around it, as well as the closest of all points to that motion from which the circle becomes manifest. Likewise, Intellect is the closest of all the beings to the Command

1. For this theme of the 'double negation', central to Sijistānī's theology, see, e.g., *Wellsprings* Para. 22.

2. 'Creation' (*khalq*, *āfarīnīsh*) is used ambiguously in our text as well as in other works of Sijistānī. In the present context, as also, e.g., in *Kitāb al-iftikhār*, 35 (*al-khalq al-awwal*), it refers to what is normally called *ibdā'*, i.e., the direct 'origination' of the Intellect beyond time. Also note that the title of the present chapter is *Dar Mubda'-i Awwal* according to the table of contents as given in the Prologue.

3. For this theme, cf. *Wellsprings* Para. 84; *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, ed. 'Ārif Tāmīr (Beirut, 1966), p. 47.

of God, while the Command of God has reached Nature, the circle. Therefore, Intellect is the remotest thing to have become manifest, because all the species, genera, specific differences, properties, accidents and individuals, had preceded it in this world, with the trace of Intellect becoming manifest as a result. Thus it has been verified that Intellect is the centre of the two worlds. Understand this!

## II. 1.4.

Considered from another point of view, Intellect has been likened to the centre because the centre is at rest. If the centre were not resting securely, none of the motions would be secure, and the trouble would be unending. In like manner, Intellect is at rest. It is on account of its rest that the spiritual souls (*naḥs hā-yi laṭīf*) are moving, thereby coming from the limit of potentiality to the limit of actuality. The coming-into-being (*kawn*) of the souls, their being caused to 'arise' (*ba'th*),<sup>1</sup> the motions of the spheres, the composition of the things pertaining to the realm of natural generation (*mawālīd*), [all this] is on account of the fact that Intellect is at rest, like the centre. Understand this!

*Issue Two: That Intellect becomes one with the Command of God when command is expressed as oneness*

## II. 2.1.

Intellect becomes one with Oneness in recognizing the Creator by virtue of the fact that, whenever it is about to seize something external to its own essence through the ordinary method of knowing things—that is, by considering *whetherness*,<sup>2</sup> or the 'isness' of things; *quiddity*, or the '[what-]thingness' of things; *quality*, or the 'howness' of things; *quantity*, or the 'howmuchness' [of things]; *cause*, or the 'why-ness' of things—in short, whenever the intellect is about to make these divisions, the light of God keeps it from doing so and makes it necessary for it to confirm pure transcendent Oneness which in no way whatsoever multiplies nor is susceptible of alteration. As a result, the Prime Intellect's confirmation of the Creator is

1. See chapter 7.

2. Replace *māhiyyat* (Persian text p. 17, line 7) with *haliyyat*. *Māhiyyat* in this place is probably due to a simple error (pace Soheil M. Afnan, *Philosophical Terminology in Arabic and Persian* [Leiden, 1964], p. 120), for the following reasons: 1. It would make little sense for the author in this context to discuss two supposedly different kinds of quiddity and to translate one of them by *hastī* while omitting 'whetherness' (= *hal al-shay'* or *hal huwa*; see, e.g., Fārābī in Muḥsin Maḥdī, *Alfārābī's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* [Ithaca, 1969], 15ff.), i.e., existence, which corresponds well to the Persian *hastī*. 2. In fact, it is generally *haliyyah* which comes before *mā'iyyah* in Sijistānī's own works, (see especially *Wellsprings* Para. 161; *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubū'āt*, 8 and 13–20), 3. Nāṣir-i Khusraw gives the same catalogue of categories in Arabic and Persian, with *haliyyat* = *hastī* in the first place, followed by *mā'iyyat* = *chi-chīzī*, *kayfiyyat* = *chigūnagī*, *limiyyat* = *chirā'i* (*Khawān al-ikhwān* chapter 82, ed. Qawīm, 232f; cf. *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn*, para. 263).

far beyond whatever marks the creatures; it is confirmation of One, not of many. Accordingly, just as Oneness does not undergo alteration from its state of being one and remains perpetually in one and the same state, so the apprehension of the Prime Intellect does not undergo alteration from one and the same state. Moreover, just as the Oneness of God has no parallel among the causes, so the First Caused [= the Intellect] has no parallel among the caused. Therefore, the Preceder's<sup>1</sup> [=the Intellect's] apprehension has no parallel among the apprehensions. And just as every [secondary] cause is in need of the superiority of this Cause [i.e., Oneness], so every caused is in need of the superiority of this Caused [i.e., the Intellect], and every apprehension and confirmation asserting the Oneness of the Creator is in need of that apprehension and confirmation which belongs exclusively to the Prime Intellect. This is how Intellect becomes one with the Command of God when Command is expressed as Oneness. Understand this!

## II. 2.2.

Intellect becomes one with the Oneness of God in still another way, and that is by apprehending itself. The Oneness of God is a cause which is unique among all the causes since it eliminates from itself whatever would qualify it as a thing or a being; indeed, Oneness is itself the cause of beings and things. Now, as Intellect looks at things, it sees every thing as manifest in itself and sees nothing beneath itself. Although there are things that are substantially removed from it, and its judgments [regarding them] vary, when Intellect looks at itself from the point of view of Oneness, it sees things not as multiple and diverse; no, it sees pure origination (*ibdā'-i mahīd*) and nothing but the sheer act of making-to-be (*hast kardan-i mujarrad*), without any difference. It becomes, then, one with Oneness in the manner just explained. Understand this!

## II. 2.3.

There is still another way for Intellect to become one with Oneness, and that is by apprehending Oneness. It [does so by] knowing that the Command of God reached the things altogether to bring them into being. It is impossible that there be another Command, by which [second] Command another thing would turn into being from not-being, because the Command of God right from the beginning passed over no useful thing without bringing it from not-being into being. Another Command cannot possibly be found because the beings altogether occupied the space of Creation completely and permanently, so that no space at all was left for any occurrence of not being. Thus, Intellect became one with Oneness and recognized Oneness at this stage because [of its knowledge that] to find any other being is excluded, just as [there is no way that] not-being would ever appear. Understand this!<sup>2</sup>

1. The 'Preceder' (*sābiq*) is the standard 'mythological' equivalent of the Intellect in classical Ismailism, the 'Follower' (*tālī*) being the Soul.

2. For this theme cf. *Wellsprings*, paras 66–69.

*Issue Three: That Intellect becomes one with the Command of God when  
Command is expressed as the Word*

II. 3.1.

In the terminology of the dialectical theologians, it is understood that a single utterance (*sukhan-i mufrad*) when referring to a substance is called 'word' (*kalimah*).<sup>1</sup> For example, you can say 'healthy' and 'sick' when these two utterances refer to Muḥammad and Khālīd, [respectively]. That is to say, 'Muḥammad is healthy' and 'Khālīd is sick'. Therefore, with regard to the 'Word', Intellect became one with the Command of God in the sense that it links all Being with God by virtue of the Creative Act (*āfarīnīsh*) and makes the creatures cognizant of the fact that every particle and every drop has come to be there (*ẓāhir shud*) through the Command of God. And the Command of God is inseparable from it, for if it were separable, that thing would be divested [of its very existence, *mu'aṭṭal*]. Thus, Intellect becomes one with the Word in the sense that it necessitates that every particle of the Creation has a share of the Command of God because every creature shares a part of the Command of God through which it has come to be there and by virtue of which it remains in being (*pāyandih buwad*), and the light of the Command of God shines in it. Understand this!

II. 3.2.

Another meaning of Intellect's becoming one with the Word is this:

It is the [creative] Word which brought forth the single utterance, although the utterance did not come into being-there [initially] at Creation's transition from the stage of Origination (*gāh-i ibdā'*) to the stage of generation (*gāh-i tawlīd*). You should know that as long as things did not come from the limit of Origination (*ḥadd-i ibdā'*) to the limit of existentionation (*takwīn*) and generational (*tawlīd*), neither Intellect came into being-there, nor did that Seed [i.e., the 'Form of Man'] which was found to be in Intellect. And Intellect was not [even] aware of its own existence (*inniyyat* or *anniyyat-i khwīsh*)<sup>2</sup> before that, as long as that thing [the 'seed'] had not come from the limit of Origination to the limit of existentionation and generation. Therefore, at the time when the Command of God, which is the Origination, reached the human being (*mardum*), the human being became [what it is, i.e.] a 'word-speaker' [*sukhan-gūy=nāṭiq=rational*] and one capable of discernment,<sup>3</sup> and Intellect became one with it. As a result, whatever utterances the human beings bring forth, such as naming things and differentiating between names and attributes and between judgments and between the outcome of these judgments,

1. This terminology seems somewhat peculiar. Sijistānī evidently intends to show the applicability of the creative word *kun* (Be!), or the logos, to everything that 'is'.

2. Cf. De Smet, *Quiétude*, p. 91.

3. Read *mumayyiz* (Persian text p. 19, line 14).

[all this] belongs to it [i.e., the Intellect]. In view of this [also], Intellect's becoming one with the Word of God is conceivable. Understand this!

*Issue Four: That Intellect becomes one with the Command of God when  
Command is expressed as knowledge<sup>1</sup>*

II. 4.1.

You should know that oneness of Intellect with Knowledge, and of Knowledge with Intellect, is a necessity. Be aware that many understand it in this way that knowledge is intelligence, and intelligence is knowledge, and for this reason they consider it correct to say that every knower is intelligent, and every intelligent being is a knower, even though the coming into being of the two worlds, the wonders of the heavenly spheres and bodies and of the elements and of the things pertaining to natural generation, [all this] is the Knowledge of God. Now since the intelligence acquired by us gives us the benefit of knowing what great benefits are in the power of Intellect, while [at the same time] being incapable of giving us the full benefit thereof, we learn from this that those acts of intelligence acquired by us are outpourings of the universal Intellect upon the particular souls (*furū-rīkhtan-i 'aql-i kull ast bar nufūs-i juzwī*), while [Intellect] is one in knowing all things and all knowables. But Intellect did not become one with the Command except after it became one with Pure Knowledge (*'ilm-i mahd*), which latter is the Command of God. This is the meaning of Intellect's becoming one with the Command of God when Command is expressed as Knowledge.

II. 4.2.

Further, Intellect has yet another [way of] becoming one with the Knowledge which is the Command of God, and that is the outpouring of [the light of] spiritual support (*ta'yīd*) upon the hearts of God's chosen ones and His servants. This is the Pure Knowledge which belongs exclusively to the Prophets, the Legatees and the Imams. It is the Knowledge of things found with many Prophets, namely, of future events and turns which cannot be perceived through the knowledge of the motions of the planets and the signs of the zodiac, and the knowledge which they need for the administration of the affairs of the Community, which cannot be perceived through the knowledge of the [worldly] administration of kings. These kinds of knowledge, which are needed for these realities, are called 'Pure Knowledge'. This Knowledge is not contaminated with anything like seeking proofs, which is, of course, the [ordinary] scientific method; it is not the kind of knowledge arrived at by the scholars of this world through one [or another] among the proofs. Now, the Pure Knowledge

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1. On the relationship between *'aql* and *'ilm* see especially Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Jāmi' al-hikmatayn*, Paras 274–80.

which is not contaminated by anything else is the one appropriate exclusively to God. Therefore, of necessity, the Prime Intellect became one with the Knowledge of God and then poured out the light of pure spiritual support upon the hearts of the chosen ones among the Prophets, so that they, thanks to that knowledge [obtained through] spiritual support, revealed for humans the way to live [in this world] and to 'return' [to their ultimate home]. Understand this!

II. 4.3.

Further, Intellect has yet another [way of] becoming one with the Knowledge of God, and that is that which is exclusively with God and was not poured out on any Spiritual Rank (*ḥadd*),<sup>1</sup> neither on the Universal Soul, nor on the Speaker-Prophets, the Legatees and the Imams. As a result, desire for this was permanently in the intellect<sup>2</sup> and remained with the Prophets throughout the cycles (*dawrhā*)<sup>3</sup> so that each one [among them] would be seeking his share. Thus, to none among the Spiritual Ranks belongs that which is present with the Intellect, and there is no one who can grasp this. And it is on account of this that Intellect thereby realized complete perfection, became self-sufficient and became the Lord for whatever is beneath itself. Understand this!

*Issue Five: On the meaning of Intellect's becoming one with the Command of God when Command is expressed as Command in itself*

II. 5.1.

This kind of [Intellect's becoming one with the Command] is such as you realize when you look at the religious Laws of the Prophets and apply some of them in blind obedience (*taqlīd*): your soul has a distaste for this and indeed fancies it to be idle sport and vexatious, but once it knows the True Reading (*ta'wīl*) and inner Reality (*ḥaqīqat*) of it, it is no longer repelled. It knows, then, [the rule] from which escaping is beyond reach, becomes familiar with it, sanctions it, and acquiesces in it. Just as the universal Intellect acquiesces in the Command of God, so the particular intellect acquiesces in the Command of the Prophets whenever it knows its inner Reality. And if Intellect had not been one with the Command as understood in Itself, the commands of the religious Laws would have no common ground and likeness (*mushākilat*) with intellect. Understand this!

1. Technical term of Ismailism, referring to 'persons' of the superior spiritual world (such as Intellect, Soul) and those of the 'world of Religion' (i.e., Prophets, Imams, etc.).

2. Sic ('*aql*', Persian text p. 21, line 14). If this is correct, then the particular intellect should be understood. But perhaps the word should be replaced by 'Soul' (*nafs*). For the 'desire' of Soul, cf. *Wellsprings*, para. 61.

3. I.e. the periods of 'hiero-history' inaugurated each time by a prophet; specifically, the great 'Cycle of Concealment' (see below, VI. 7. 4.)

## II. 5.2.

Moreover, the Command of God is the act of making-to-be, and making-to-be has no subsistence except in Intellect—which is to say that, were it not for Intellect, there would be no being at all. The proof for this statement is this: Were it not for intellect, no artisan in the world would produce any work. Furthermore, the First Being, i.e., Intellect, is the result of perfect generosity,<sup>1</sup> and perfect generosity is that for which Intellect became the medium by virtue of excellence. Now, nothing can become a medium except at a time when it is itself in being. Therefore, the Prime Intellect was not posterior in being to the act of making-to-be, nor did the act-of-making-to-be occur prior to the Prime Intellect. These two have no priority over one another. Thus we say: The Command of the transcendent Originator is the act of making-to-be, and Intellect is the first made-to-be. Therefore, the Command, which is the act of making-to-be, and Intellect, which is the first made-to-be, have no priority over one another. Understand this!

*Issue Six: On How the seed of both worlds is in Intellect*

## II. 6.1.

Should you think of Intellect as a substance having subsisted by itself at a time when things did not exist, neither body nor spirit nor anything [else], and that things came subsequently from that [state of non-existence] into existence, this would be a major delusion, an idea far from any reasonable argument and one close to wicked thoughts that induce men into error.

If, [by contrast], you think of Intellect as being the ‘Mercy of God’ (*rahmat-i khudāy*)<sup>2</sup> which was poured out upon the creatures in such a way that every thing had a glitter from the light of the Prime Intellect in accordance with its own ‘measure’ (*miqdār*), be this a corporeal or a spiritual being, or a naturally generated composite—or let it be a Perfect Form (*ṣūratī tamām*), from which the forms become manifest<sup>3</sup> (for it is by virtue of that ‘Form’ that one can claim Intellect to be the source for all beings to be (*būdanīhā*), and bring to evidence its issuing-forth (*jastār-i ’ū*) by pointing to the fact that its light is shining in [all] things)—if it is in this way that you think of the substance of Intellect, then your thinking is right.

1. *Rādhi-i tamm* = Ar. *jūd*, ‘generosity’; see N. Khusraw, *Khawān al-ikhwān*, ed. Qawīm, chap. 79, p. 228, 4–5, translation of Sijistānī’s *Yanābī*, para. 66.

2. Perhaps an allusion to the Prophet as divine *rahma*; cf. Qur’ān 21:107. The *rahma* theme is equally important for Ghazzālī (cf. *Mishkāt al-anwār*, ed. ‘Afifī [Cairo, 1964], p. 71), and fundamental for Ibn ‘Arabī (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, chapter 16).

3. Instead of ‘from which the forms become manifest’ (*kaz ān ṣūrathā zāhir shawad*), one could also translate ‘which [Perfect Form] becomes manifest from [through] these forms’. In this case, the ‘Perfect Form’ (of Man?) could be a reference to the expected Qā’im or the ‘Lord of the Final Rising’. In any case, the passage is highly ambiguous.



Thus, Intellect is a light poured forth upon creation, shining in every thing, and its luminosity is in accordance with the measure of the substance of [each] thing, depending on the wide or narrow range of that substance. [What happens], then, [is this:] if the recipient of the light of Intellect is a single spiritual being, then Intellect's impact on it turns out as love; if the recipient of Intellect's light are the [elemental] composites, then Intellect's impact on them turns into the seed of generation and corruption deposited therein, i.e., what occurs due to the motion of the composites [i.e., the minerals];<sup>1</sup> if, however, the recipient of Intellect's light are the beings pertaining to natural generation, then Intellect's impact is translated into [sheer] benefits, because of the [special] seeds deposited in them; and if the recipient of Intellect's light is the human being, then Intellect's impact on it turns out to be the fact that it desires permanence and longs for eternal life. From this point of view, it was necessary to plant the seed of both worlds into Intellect. Understand this!

### Discourse Three: On the Second Creation [i.e., Soul]

*Issue One: That it is in the Form of Man that Soul has come down*

#### III. 1.1.

Know that it is in the Form of Man, from among all things of the world, that Soul has come down because the soul is joined to life and makes its abode in harmony (*i'tidāl*); in the natural world, nothing beneath the human being is capable of complete harmony. Things in the world fall into three categories: inanimate, vegetal, and animal. Now there is for Soul no descending to and joining those [first] two categories, because the soul joins the life of the senses and the harmony of the intellect, and these two are in Man. Indeed, life is the core of Nature, or its quintessence (*maghz*), while harmony is the core of Intellect.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in view of the fact that the soul borders on one side on intellect and on the other side on nature, and that it has no abode except in between these two, i.e. the life of nature and the harmony of intellect, we have said that it is in the Form of Man that Soul has come down. Understand this!

#### III. 1.2.

As for the manner in which Soul comes down in the Form of Man, it is this: at the first stage, [humans] recognize the name of things and the attributes of things from the teaching of mother and father and the verbal instruction (*talqīn*) of the people among whom they are being brought up. In this regard, humans are of three groups. The first are those who are satisfied with those names and attributes which they have learned through verbal instruction. The second group are those who, having learned names and attributes from the learned, know what legal matters (*kārhā-yi*

1. Cf. V. 1. 3.

2. Cf. *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Abū'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Persian text p. 54, line 6.

*sharʿī*) are obligatory for them. They are cognizant of jurisprudence, dialectical theology, traditions, poetry, parables and whatever is connected to the exoteric (*ẓāhir*). Now the third group are those who, not being satisfied with the knowledge of names, attributes and parables, have searched the true meanings and realities from the Lords of Religion (*khudāwandān-i dīn*). Once they have perceived and understood, their soul is made to master those esoteric Sciences (*ʿilmhā-yi bāṭin*) and noble Mysteries (*sirrā-yi nīkū*). Then, moving onward on the stages of Soul, they will reach the most beautiful of all dwellings, so that Soul will have come down in the Form of Man in perfect completeness, for they remain eternally with this True Knowledge and noble status in everlasting paradise.<sup>1</sup> Understand this!

### III. 1.3.

Further, [consider] that Intellect is not for one moment [lit. hour] separated from Soul, for Soul is under the supervision of Intellect while it is through Soul that the powers of Intellect, which are joined to it, come into being manifest. And the Command<sup>2</sup> and Intellect are not found in anything other than Man. Were it the case that Soul existed [i.e., settled down] in something beneath Man, then Intellect's coming down would have become manifest in that [other] thing. But since it is Man who is properly qualified by Intellect, at the exclusion of everything else, we know that it is because of Soul's coming down [in the Form of Man] that Intellect has become manifest in the world of Nature. In this way, [too,] Soul's coming down in the Form of Man has been verified. Understand this!

### *Issue Four: On recognizing the share of animals in Soul*

### III. 4.1.

Know that between Intellect and Soul, there are two other powers, namely, love (*maḥabbat*) and domination (*ghalabah*).<sup>3</sup> Through love, Intellect gives benefit to Soul; through domination, Soul receives benefit from Intellect. These two powers were issued from Soul to the animals in addition to the two powers that had already been issued to them, namely, giving and taking. You will not see an animal that would not love its partner and its child with natural love and that would not love to dominate another. And it is obvious that the animals take benefit from the

1. The space between brackets (Persian text p. 28, line 18) reads *dar bihišt* in MS. Cairo (MS. Tehran omits both *dar bihišt* and *bāqī*).

2. This translates the Persian text (p. 29, line 2) as it is. However, a comparison with I. 3.2. would suggest that *wa amr* should perhaps be read as *bi-amr* or *az jihat-i amr* and attached to the preceding phrase. The translation, then, would run as follows: 'while it is through Soul that the powers of Intellect, which are joined to it thanks to the Command, come into being manifest. And Intellect is not found in anything other than Man.'

3. For this 'Neo-Empedocles' theme, cf. Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran and Paris, 1952), Arabic text, paras 147f.

plants, and that they give benefits [to humans] is evident from the existence of such useful things as milk, meat, butter, wool, and hair. These are obvious facts, because, [while] the power of the animals is limited to the five senses, love and domination are found in all five. Thus, love in relation to eye-sight is manifest in such things as the eye's delight in beautiful colours and beautiful faces, and domination in relation to eye-sight consists in the soul's seizing the forms that it desires to create.<sup>1</sup> Love in relation to hearing is found, for example, in the experience of delight from agreeable sounds and nice tales, and domination in relation to hearing in the production of melodies from the pipe. Love in relation to smell is seen, for example, in the experience of delight from fragrance, and domination in relation to smell, for example, in the inhalation of fresh air. Love in relation to taste is at work in such things as the experience of delight from sweet agreeable tastes, and domination in relation to taste in preparing food for consumption. Love in relation to touch is obvious, for example, in the delight one experiences from soft objects and fine clothes, and domination in relation to touch in the act of embracing and transmitting semen. This is the share of animals in Soul. Understand this!

### III. 4.2.

Animals still have another share in Soul, and that is the following: some among the animals are capable of learning civilized human behaviour (*adab-i mardum*). For example, horses train for warfare and games, the oxen learn draught and elephants warfare. Similarly, the hawk, the falcon and the cheetah learn hunting, parrots talking. So, if animals had no share in Soul, namely, love and domination, these kinds of civilized behaviour would not be found among them.<sup>2</sup>

There is still another share, nobler than these, that animals have in Soul, namely, their desire to stay alive (*baqā'*) and their shying away from death (*fanā'*), for there is no animal that would not out of its own proper being fear death and try to stay alive. And it is for this reason that one does not destroy animals unless this carries benefit. Understand this!

*Issue Five: On how sensation is accessed by the one capable of sensation, namely, the Soul*

### III. 5.1.

This may be likened to the reception of the imprint of a seal. Receiving the imprint of a seal is something in between the artisan's work and natural generation of beings about to exist. It is incorrect to assimilate the accession of sensation to [natural

1. MS. Cairo reads *nafs nigāh khwāhad kardan*, which is probably no more than a conjecture by the transcriber; MS. Tehran is identical with the printed text (p. 33, lines 1–2).

2. Cf. *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Abū'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Persian text p. 56f.

generation of] beings about to exist because the latter requires that there be a state of existence which was not before, whereas through accession of sensation nothing comes to exist in the one capable of sensation that did not exist before. Nor should accession of sensation be assimilated to the artisan's work because the latter implies acquisition [of new forms],<sup>1</sup> whereas this is not the case in the accession of sensation by the one capable of sensation. Now that both these assimilations have been invalidated, what remains is the reception of an imprint, such as the imprint of a seal. This means that sensation is accessed by the one capable of it neither in the way of generation nor in the manner of art work, but in the way the imprint occurs from the ring to the wax, ... for the wax receives from the ring nothing that would change either its weight or its shape (*shakl*). This is how sensation is accessed by the one capable of sensation. Understand this!<sup>2</sup>

### III. 5.3.

Accession of sensation by the one capable of sensation has yet another modality, which is the noblest of all: the fact that the soul is able to take what sensation transmits from visible objects to the one capable of sensation as proof of what sensation has no access to and is more beautiful and perfect. For example, whenever visual sensation transmits the form of a person to the one capable of sensation, the latter can produce in its inner space a form more perfect, more beautiful and more luminous, and this imagined form, then, becomes an imprint in the substance of the soul, just as what appeared first through sensation became an imprint. Similarly, whenever it hears a charming melody, it can imagine a more beautiful melody, which then becomes an imprint in the soul; just as what it heard first through sensation became an imprint. The same applies to any fragrance or flavour that it can imagine, and every touch; all this transmits to the soul something greater and nobler than what sensation perceives. This is how sensation is accessed by the one capable of sensation. Understand this!

*Issue Six: On how speech is accessed by the one capable of speech,  
namely, the Soul*

### III. 6.1.

Know that speech is accessed by the one capable of speech with [three conditions]: nature, intention, and convention. As for intention, it is as in the phrase 'Leave the house!' As for nature, it concerns the organs of enunciation that are made for speaking, such as the pharynx, the tongue and the lips. As for convention, it means

1. Cf. below, IV. 3. 1.

2. The image of the 'imprint' can be traced to Aristotle (*De anima*, II, 424a 17–21) and can be seen in Fārābī, *Risālah fi'l-'aql*, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 1983), paras 15–16, although Sijistānī's point is not the same. Cf. below, IV. 6.1.–3, on the spiritual beauty of Nature and Art.

that every group must know its own language and its vocabulary. So, whenever [the three conditions of] intention, nature and convention are met, speech is accessed by the one capable of speech (*nāṭiq*), which means by the soul, so that the soul will master the purpose of the enunciation. But whenever one of these [three conditions] fails, the speech is not accessed by the one capable of speech, and the enunciation is invalid. An example of this is the following: Suppose someone wants to say to another person 'Leave the house!' but says to the other person, 'Enter the house!' the speech is not accessed by the one capable of speech, because the enunciation is beside the aim. Similarly, if the intention is right but the natural disposition and the organ of the enunciation are not, the utterance will be beside the purpose, as when somebody who has difficulty pronouncing the letter L and instead pronounces R, thus saying 'Reave!' the speech will not be accessed by the one capable of speech. Again, if he gets the intention right and the organ is perfect but convention is not correctly observed and the person speaks in a different way than what is commonly known among the people, as when somebody says, 'Sors!' to an Anglophone or 'Leave!' to a Francophone,<sup>1</sup> the enunciation will not be accessed by the recipient. But when all three aspects are met—correct intention, perfect organ, and commonly known convention—then the enunciation will be accessed by the recipient so the latter can master the intention of the sounds of the utterance. Understand this!

### III. 6.2.

Further, speech is accessed by the one capable of speech with an additional [benefit hidden] under the spoken word; in fact, this [hidden benefit] is the well-spring of enunciation, its very source, and [it explains] its multiple emergence occurring in the form of judgments. Thus, whenever an enunciation is accessed and linked with two judgments, [the conditions of] correct intention, harmonious organ and commonly-known convention [being met in the first place], the enunciation is accessed by the recipient with an additional [benefit] which is [hidden] under the enunciation. An example of this is the following: Suppose somebody says 'Every human being is living, and every living being is a substance'. Now, if the intention in knowing every human being [to be living] and every living being to be a substance is correct, and if the organs used for his words in which two judgments have been made are harmonious, and if he is familiar with the conventional meaning of these sounds, then, an additional [benefit] appears for the one capable of speech. Thus, speech is accessed by the one capable of speech just as it is in the case of a single judgment, but it happens that an enunciation with two joined judgments is accessed by the recipient with additional [benefit hidden] under the enunciation, and that is the conclusion [of the syllogism]. Understand this!

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1. Adapted from the original, which uses *ukhruj* with '*ajamī*' and *bīrūn shaw* with *tāzī-zabān*, respectively.

## III. 6.3.

There is still another way for accession of speech by the one capable of speech and a different meaning, indeed the noblest of all meanings of enunciation, and that is the fact that God bestows upon the Prophets and the Chosen Ones the capacity to enunciate through their tongues subtle utterances in which subtle meanings are inbuilt. In the case of Muḥammad, for example, it was [his] producing a set of testimonies to the Purity [of the One, *ikhhlāṣ*] and those noble meanings that were hidden therein. Nobody is able to perceive these noble meanings except those spiritually supported (*mu'ayyadān*).<sup>1</sup> As a result [of their perception of these noble meanings, these] became a balance (*mīzān*) by which they measured the skies and the earth and the souls and the Ranks (*ḥudūd*) of [all] this and its creation. And it cannot [yet] be known how many things they may [still] measure with this [balance], and how many noble meanings they will bring forth from there! This is what is meant by accession of speech by the one capable of speech. Understand this!

*Issue Seven: On how thought is accessed by the one capable of thought, namely, the Soul*

## III. 7.1.

Know that the wellspring of thought (*fikrat*) is the idea (*khāṭir*) and the mount of thought is the intellectual power (*dhihn*), that is, the mind (*hūsh*). Whenever the well-springs of the idea are flowing forth upon thought, and the mind is made malleable so that thought can mount it, thought is accessed by the one capable of thought so the latter can master the hidden. But whenever the wellsprings of the idea are blocked, thought has no sustaining power; no, it is weak, short, of no impact or importance. Whenever the wellsprings of the idea are flowing forth but the mind is not made malleable for thought to mount it, what appear are wicked thoughts, so that intellectually absurd ideas get mixed together with [claims of] deeds that are obviously impossible for humans to perform, and incorrect thoughts are brought forth, as with fools and the mentally deficient.

## III. 7.2.

Know that the blockage of the wellsprings of the idea is due to the domination by nature, that surplus which is there in the body without being necessary to [sustain] life, while at the same time the outpouring of the wellsprings of the idea is due to the healthy state of nature. Harmonious temperance here lies in careful upbringing of the body and in restricting oneself to that which sustains life, so that the mind is made malleable for thought, and thought can mount it. And this will happen

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1. I.e. Prophets, Imams and 'Proofs'. See Prologue, and II. 4.2., III. 7.4., VI. 1.3., and VI. 7.1.

[only] when the one capable of thought no [longer] covets the matters of this world and is no [longer] deluded by the reasons of this world, when all he covets is gathering wisdom and knowledge and his inner being is pure, when he searches the true realities of things. [Once his] certitude and mind are righted through contentment of the one capable of thought, and [the latter, i.e., the soul] places its delight in the gathering of wisdom, then the mind is made malleable for thought to mount it, and it will carry thought to the ultimate high stages and grades and sublime realities. But whenever certitude and mind are not right, because the one capable of thought is coveting this world and gathers the reasons of this world, the mind is balky and keeps itself removed from thought. As a result, thought remains perplexed, has no success in [undertaking] any good work, and is removed from the right course, so that the one capable of thought has [cause for] great concern. [In short, then,] thought is accessed by the one capable of thought by virtue of two things: the flowing forth of the wellsprings of the idea and the malleability of the mind. Understand this!

### III. 7.3.

Further, thought may be accessed by the one capable of thought by way of teaching. That is, if one who knows teaches one capable of learning. By taking the trouble of teaching the student piece by piece, the teacher awakens (*mī-angīzad*) intellectual benefits caused by the flowing forth of the wellsprings of the idea and the malleability of the mind, and there is no need for the student [to do anything] but<sup>1</sup> to retain what he learns thanks to the overflow of the idea, that is to say, due to the flowing forth of the wellsprings of the idea and the malleability of the mind. Indeed this is rather like a prepared meal that the cook brings before the customer, and the latter does not have to take the trouble of cooking. Quite similarly, it is not for the student in his learning to go to the trouble of gathering it all together; he only has the trouble of learning, so that thought may be accessed by the one capable of learning as it is accessed by the one capable of thought. Understand this!

### III. 7.4.

Further, thought may be accessed by the one capable of thought all of a sudden, that is, easily, as is the case with those favours that God bestowed upon Prophets, Legatees, Imams and 'Proofs' (*hujjatān*), enabling them to master unseen things that are not realized in the heart of anyone else nor have been heard by any ear,<sup>2</sup> and by virtue of which the life of the souls in cycles following one another will be abundant. And if the person who is given this favour by God is aware that it is indeed a favour from God and then tries through hard work and acquisition [of

1. Conjecturing *magar* for *dar* (Persian text p. 39, line 11).

2. Allusion to a famous *ḥadīth qudsī* frequently quoted by Sijistānī (e.g. *Wellsprings*, paras 99, 131, 133). Cf. I Corinthians 2, 9.

learning, *iktisāb*] to produce something similar, he will not be able to do so. As much as his ideas may be flowing forth, and his mind may have become malleable, he will not be empowered to produce similar benefits. Moreover, the fact that it is God who bestows this favour upon this person [ensures that] it will settle more deeply in the hearts, that the ears will be more eager to listen to it and that the souls will be more attached to it. It is in these ways, then, that thought may be accessed by the one capable of thought. Understand this!

#### Discourse Four: On the Third Creation, Which is Nature

*Issue Three: That the forms of Nature are not posterior to their source material*

##### IV. 3.1.

Although the Second Creation [i.e., Soul] is the form of the First Creation [i.e., Intellect], it did not fall behind it, not even by the twinkling of an eye. Indeed if it had been removed from it only by the twinkling of an eye, the First Creation [itself] would not have come into existence. Accordingly, it is normal that the forms of Nature should not be posterior to their source material (*aṣlhā*), their prime matter (*hayūlāhā-yi khwīsh*). To be sure, manufactured forms, i.e., the forms produced by craftsmen, are posterior to their source material, because these forms are acquired,<sup>1</sup> whereas the natural forms come all in sequence. And whenever a naturally generated being comes forth, its form comes with its matter (*māddah*), whether it is small or big. For example, consider the sperm, which is the source material for the birth of a being to be born. The form of the sperm exists in concomitance with its source material. Then, when it changes from the state of being a sperm, it becomes a blood clot,<sup>2</sup> having extracted for itself a surplus from its source material, which surplus did not exist in the sperm. Again, the form of the blood clot exists in proportion with its source material, until it becomes an embryo, and the [form of the] embryo is consolidated proportionately to what it will have acquired from its source material, up to the moment it becomes a born being, a living being capable of perception and motion, when again it consolidates its form in proportion to [the matter] it will have acquired from its source. This is why we have said that the natural forms are not posterior to their source material in appearing, unlike the forms produced by craftsmen, which are indeed posterior to their source material in appearing.

##### IV. 3.3.

Further: The natural forms in the true sense (*bi-ḥaqīqat*), those which are not susceptible to any change in their fundamental being (*nihād*), are the ‘forms’ of the celestial spheres [i.e., the stars], which are imprinted in the orbits of the Sphere. To

1. Cf. III. 5.1. and IV. 6.1.

2. Cf. Qur’ān 22:5 and 23:14.



suppose that either the [body of] the sphere or the forms imprinted in it are inactive [*mu'aṭṭal*, i.e., without voluntary motion of their own] would be impossible for the following reason: If their rising were due to the motion of Nature, then these forms, that is, the stars, would be rising while their motion would not be due to the motion of the sphere. Rather, their motion would be due to something else, and natural motion would then require that the forms which are the stars have their motion from the [natural upward] motion of fire. But in that case, why is it that the journey of the stars is circular, just like the orbit of the sphere? By virtue of this proof [i.e., since circular motion could not then be explained], we know that the motions of the stars are caused by the spheres, which demonstrates that the forms of the spheres, i.e. the stars, do not fall behind the motions of the sphere. Understand this!

*Issue Four: That the Centre of Nature is more worthy than the horizons to enjoy contiguity with the spiritual beings*

IV. 4.1.

Know that for each among the natural beings, there is a power in which it participates; the spiritual beings participate in many powers beyond measure. Having realized that the Centre (*markaz*), which is to say, the Earth, participates in its own [specific] power, which God has given it; that it [also] participates in the power of water, which moves on its surface; participates in the power of the air, which is drawn upon it; participates in the power of fire, which is hidden in it; participates in the power of the spheres and the stars—as can be known from the fact that the disc of the sun because of its great size warms the earth and makes the plants grow, whereas in the case of the stars, their allowing the earth to participate is hidden due to their small size—having thus seen all the powers being at work in Nature, and that the Earth is their recipient which participates in all of them together, and that all of them converge with it, we know that the Earth is more worthy than the horizons to enjoy contiguity with the spiritual beings. Do you not see that Man (*mardum*), in whom the subtle essence of both worlds is altogether present to the utmost degree, exists on the Earth? That his life is on Earth, and that his return (*ma'ād*) and coming back (*bāz-gasht*) is to the Earth? That he is called to arise (*bar-angikhtan-i ū*)<sup>1</sup> from the Earth? Thus it necessarily follows, from the premises that we have pointed out, that the earth is no less worthy of being a dwelling place for the angels than the sky, because so many powers that are in harmony with the spiritual beings reach the earth. Understand this!

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1. Chapter VII.

## IV. 4.2.

Further, there is the fact that it is on the Centre that Prophets, Legatees, and Imams have appeared and that it is on earth that the Books known as the Word of God have come down, in the languages of humans who exist on earth. All these are spiritual powers; effecting in anticipation this promise of God: 'I shall spread justice on Earth and re-assemble the humans on Earth and give the Earth to the humans of good as inheritance!'<sup>1</sup> If there were anything nobler in existence than the Centre, these [spiritual powers] would have been linked to that other thing. But concerning this link, the fact that the Books and the Angels [are said to] 'come down from the sky' does not mean that they come down from the physical sky; what is meant is the 'Heaven of Religion' (*āsmān-i dīn*), which is elevated in terms of excellence and rank above the humans living at a certain epoch. These subtle realities descend upon the heart of him over whose tongue they are made easily understandable [i.e., the Prophets, Imams, and 'Proofs'].<sup>2</sup> That is why we have said that the Centre is more worthy than the skies to enjoy contiguity with the spiritual beings. Understand this!

*Issue Six: That the beauty or adornment of Nature is spiritual*

## IV. 6.1.

Having noticed a certain resemblance between the natural forms and the forms produced by craftsmen with regard to figure and shape, and having perceived that the embellishment found in the forms produced by craftsmen must be spiritual, because they are traces of the soul [of the craftsman] and acquired from something other [than their immediate source material],<sup>3</sup> you should realize that natural beauty and its forms must be spiritual, too, not natural. Indeed if the beauty of Nature were itself from Nature, it would have to be attributed to one among the natural elements (*ṭab'ī az ṭab'hā*). But the beauty of Nature does not come from such an element which provides the matter of Nature, and from which its potentiality may be known. Rather, it consists of spiritual 'colours', (*ranghā-yi rūḥānī*). Just as the colours imbue the stuff prepared or made to receive the colours of the craftsmen, so the beauty of Nature consists of spiritual colours which imbued the beings to be generated naturally with the traces of Soul, which encompasses Nature. Thus it has been verified that the adornment of Nature is spiritual. Understand this!

1. Cf. Qur'ān 21:104–105, which itself evidently refers to Psalm 37:29: 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever'. The theme is eminently Shi'i; cf. Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris, 1971), p. 57. Cf. also here, VI. 7. 2–3. The reference to Qur'ān 21:105 is also found in the *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Abu'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Persian text p. 48.

2. On this hierarchy, see Introd. p. 76, n. 1.

3. See above, IV. 3. 1. Instead of *az ū* (Persian text p. 49, line 18), I read *ū az* (with both MSS. Cairo and Tehran) and understand *juzwīst* (line 19) to mean *juz [az] way ast*.

## IV. 6.2.

Further, if corporeal things come to exist in corporeal things, they constitute for the latter an increase and an addition, and if they are separated from them, there is a decrease and their quantity diminishes. But if a spiritual thing enters or leaves a material thing, its quantity remains as it is. Now, having thought about the adornment of Nature and the adornment of Art, we realize that it joins another thing and leaves it again without there being any increase or decrease in the thing joined. Take, for example, the brocade weaver; the beauty appearing in the brocade is in the being (*nihād*) of the brocade weaver, for, if the brocade is torn apart or if its threads are pulled out one by one, the quantity of the brocade is neither diminished nor increased. The same applies to the silk used for the weaving of the brocade; if the brocade weaver makes many figurations (*andīshahā*) appear in the silk, the quantity of the silk does not increase. This will make you aware that whatever beauty was joined to the brocade came from the brocade weaver, and the beauty that left the brocade when the latter was torn apart, was spiritual, not corporeal. Or take the narcissus flower. When we contemplate it, and people turn it from hand to hand, smell at it and look at its beauty, the quantity of the flower does not thereby become less. So we learn from the narcissus flower that its beauty was spiritual, not natural. Understand this!<sup>1</sup>

## IV. 6.3.

If a soul becomes an expert in the art of painting, it can imitate (*hikāyat kardan*) the beauty of this or the colours of that, until it can bring into appearance, if it so desires, the form of whatever it wishes: the form of the animals, or the form of the seat and the house, or the form of the human being. That it can thus imitate [the forms] is due to their being spiritual and in accordance with the spiritual substance. Do you not see that nobody can create a thing of nature, whether animal, vegetable or mineral? But one can bring into appearance whatever he wishes from the beauty of Nature, and one can do so because that [beauty] is spiritual. Understand this!

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1. The argument of this passage is almost identical with the one found in the *Sharḥ-i qaṣīda-yi Abū'l-Haytham-i Jurjānī*, Persian text p. 58, where the commentator attributes this idea (*qawl*) to the 'great Master' (*ustād-i buzurg*) and says that he himself has 'translated' or 'commented upon' it (*tarjuma kardastim*) elsewhere. It remains unclear whether this 'great Master' is Abū'l-Haytham, as was assumed by Corbin in the French introduction to this work (pp. 38–40), but it seems more likely that Sijistānī is meant, because the title *ustād-i buzurg* occurs only in this passage whereas Abū'l-Haytham is generally referred to as *khwāja-yi mā* in this text. Thus, if Abū'l-Haytham's commentator is indicating here that he 'translated elsewhere' the *qawl* of Sijistānī on the spiritual beauty of Nature, then this might well mean that he is, in fact, to be identified with our anonymous translator of the original *Kashf al-mahjūb*! However, the mysterious *ustād-i buzurg* might of course still be someone else.

**Discourse Five: On the Fourth Creation [i.e. The Species]***Issue One: That the species are preserved in their being*

## V. 1.1.

If it were conceivable for one species not to be included in preservation, so that it would decay, then the same would be conceivable for all species, and if this were the case, then corruption would abolish all of them. And if corruption would abolish all of them, then what is under the species, that is, the individuals would also be abolished, and what is above the species, that is, the genera, would also be abolished because the genera unite the species and the species unite the individuals. And the abolition of the individuals would entail the abolition of the lower world, and the abolition of the genera would entail the abolition of the higher world. But these two worlds are not abolished. Therefore, since the permanence of both the genera and the individuals is a necessity, the permanence of the species, which is what preserves both, is also necessary. Thus it has been verified that the species are preserved in their being and not one is abolished. Understand this!

## V. 1.2.

Further: the species are the radiations of those 'forms' which are fixed (*murakkaz?*) in those celestial spheres which are the upper limit of the upward motion of Nature.<sup>1</sup> None of these realities is ever abolished; on the contrary, they are preserved in the celestial bodies, and there is no obstacle between them and the Centre [of Nature, *markaz*, i.e., the Earth] which [obstacle] would keep the species in that abode. Therefore, the permanence of the forms of the sphere is a necessity, and there cannot be any obstacle between the stars and the species. Necessarily, therefore, the species must be preserved in their being.

## V. 1.3.

If somebody holds that the species are greater in number than the forms of the sphere, this is incorrect. In fact, this is based on an erroneous assumption on his part in the matter under discussion, for this person assumes that a multitude of things equals a multitude of species when they constitute one and the same species, such as sulphur, vitriol, gold, and silver. Despite their differences, these are of one species, and their differences are [only] due to the different mixtures (*mizāj*) of the respective places from which they come forth by way of generation (*tawallud*). The plants, too, are all of one species, despite the great differences that exist among them. The same goes for the multitude of the animals, such as the ant, the gnat, the horse, or the camel, although they are all different in form, they are one

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1. Not entirely clear. The 'forms' are the stars (cf. IV. 3. 3.), but the 'upper limit' of Nature should normally be the lunar sphere (cf. *Wellsprings*, para. 13).

species. And if God lets the forms of the sphere take charge<sup>1</sup> of the creatures [i.e., the species preserved in their being], he can also have them take charge of the forms of those [individual beings] that are generated and born one after the other. Understand this!

*Issue Three: That the species do not mix with each other, neither at the time of composition, nor after composition*

V. 3.1.

This is because the species are linked to the individuals. So, if it were admissible that the species mix with each other, one would have to admit that individuals [of different species] mix with each other, and find a man who is half donkey half man, or a donkey who is half bird half donkey. But such a thing does not exist and cannot exist. It does not exist because all its benefits would become void, and God does nothing void. And the mixing of species with one another cannot possibly exist because the species are linked to the individuals. Thus it has been verified that the species do not mix with each other. Understand this!

V. 3.2.

Further: something that exists *in potentia* and comes to exist *in actu* will bring forth from itself into actual existence what was in it potentially. If it were admissible that the sperm of the donkey which is *in potentia* a donkey, be a horse, or that the sperm of the horse which is *in potentia* a horse, be a donkey, the wisdom of God would be void. But this does not exist. Understand this!

V. 3.3.

As for the mixing after the separation from the body, a group among the ignoramuses fancied that one species becomes another species. That group is the one to whom the doctrine of transmigration (*tanāsukh*) is attributed, in such a way that the soul (*rūḥ*) of man goes into the body of a dog or a donkey, and the soul of a dog or a donkey comes into the body of a man. Among all of the nonsense they profess, this is the worst because it amounts to an enormous slander, for we can see that the form of a dog is determined ['measured'] in the sperm of a dog, that it came from a dog and entered a dog, and that everything needed for it to become capable of sense perception, movement, etc., was existent in that sperm. Having seen whatever increase and decrease it goes through until it is completely formed in its womb, at which moment should we imagine, and would it be permissible to say, that the soul of man has entered that dog? You must realize that such a judgment would be invalid. And then, what could be the benefit of such mixing of the species with one

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1. Reading *bigumāshad* instead of *bigushāyad* (Persian text p. 56, line 10).

another after [the soul] has left the body? If they say, 'God punishes the sinners in the bodies of animals', we reply that if that claim is true, then human bodies are quite sufficient for the punishment of sinners. Indeed there are many in human bodies that are more stinking and dirty than the dog, the wolf and the swine!

## V. 3.4.

Further, each species has a share and a determined measure from its own source, from which it comes forth. These [sources] are the spheres that transmit their influx onto them in such a way that no [species] can ever be separated [from its respective source] with regard to its form. Indeed, to each species in creation belongs respectively one form of the sphere, and it is that [form] which preserves the species in its being.<sup>1</sup> Thus it has been verified that the species do not mix with each other, neither at the time of composition, nor after composition. Understand this!

*Issue Five: That the greater or smaller number of individuals does not entail increase or decrease in the virtues*

## V. 5.1.

Know that the virtues are [spiritual] matters (*aṣṭhā*), that is, basic resources (*māyahā*), and that they have forms which are their recipients.<sup>2</sup> Now think of the following: regardless of whether a particular virtue is being received by one individual (*shakhṣ*) or many, [the value of that] virtue neither decreases nor increases through the smaller or greater number of individual [recipients]. Consider courage, which is one of the virtues proper to the soul. Whether one individual or many have courage, courage remains exactly of the same quality (*ḥāl*) in the one individual as it is in the many. Indeed, one individual may bring forth such an amount of miracles of courage as [even] a multitude will not be able to do because, while each among the many individuals has a share of courage, the whole is in that unique person, and the part does not have as much power as the whole!<sup>3</sup> Similarly, knowledge is one among the virtues of the soul, which is proper to man. It may well happen that in one individual there is so much knowledge as is not [even] in the totality of all of them, and that what appears in that unique man is more wonderful than what appears in the multitude of men. It is for this reason that it is said traditionally that Adam had so much intelligence and understanding as is not<sup>4</sup> [even found] in all his children together. Thus, what is meant by 'Adam' is a unique individual in whom

1. Cf. V. 1. 2. and Suhrawardī's 'Lords of the species' (*arbāb al-anwā*).

2. The Persian text (p. 63, lines 11–12) seems somewhat garbled here. What seems clear, however, is that the 'forms' in this case are not Aristotelian 'forms' but rather material receptacles or moulds, i.e., individual bodies receiving the spiritual matter of 'virtue'.

3. Probably a reference to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

4. Adding *nabāshad* (Persian text p. 64, line 6).

virtue is altogether there, and what is meant by ‘his children’ is the multitude of individuals in which virtue is scattered. And one among the *mirabilia* of Adam is precisely that the [human] creatures claim descent from him as his offspring, and that paternity is attributed to him. It is for this reason that we have said that from the greater or lesser number of individuals, it does not follow that virtue becomes less or more.

V. 5.2.

Further, the virtues being received by individuals may be likened to craftsmanship with regard to [the question under discussion, namely,] increase or decrease, for, with every craft that you may think of, such as woodworking or the art of the goldsmith, you must realize that to receive more gold and silver does not mean for the goldsmith that his art is thereby increased, nor does his receiving less gold and silver imply a decrease in his art. In the same way, we say that the virtues do not become more or less on account of the greater or smaller number of individuals. Understand this!

V. 5.3.

Another proof for what we have established is this: it is evident that virtues move in the world from one people to another, for it is established that at one time knowledge was with the Greeks. They were famous for this virtue, and they had sharp discernment and a penetrating mind. Later, this virtue moved and came to the Muslims. And prior to these two peoples, [this] virtue was in the land of Iran, and at some time among the people of India, and each of these nations has many books about this. But they could not act in such a way that the virtue of knowledge would remain in Greece, or with the Iranians, or the Indians, for it had to come to the Muslims, because there can be no increase or decrease in the virtues. The same applies to courage, as mentioned earlier. It appears in any given nation but then leaves it and moves to another. Thus, at one time, courage was with the Turks, at another time with the Iranians, at another time with the Byzantines, at another time with the Arabs, at another time with the Indians. Right now, it is with the Berbers, and courage is obvious in them. If increase and decrease [of the number of bodies] were applicable to virtue, courage would have remained with every people and would not have been annulled [there] by its appearance in another people. That is why we have said that the virtues do not increase or decrease on account of the greater or smaller number of individuals. Understand this!

V. 5.4.

The proof for the accuracy of what we have said is the following: there exists a Sage of such penetrating Knowledge and Wisdom that nobody can rival him, of such eminence and virtue as is seen in nobody [else] before he leaves that world.

And when he leaves this world, his Knowledge and virtue are scattered among the humans. At the time when his Knowledge appears [again] among the humans, they know that it is his Knowledge that reached them. That is why the Knowledge of the Prophet is passed on as inheritance to the Legatee and from the Legatee to the Imam and from the Imam to the 'Proof'. Thus it has been verified that the virtues do not increase or decrease on account of the smaller or greater number of individuals. Understand this!

### **Discourse Six: On the Fifth Creation [i.e., Prophethood]**

#### *Issue One: On how prophethood of Prophets is facilitated*

##### VI. 1.1.

Everything in creation has a quintessence, which is indispensable for that thing to be in existence and to manifest its benefits—those benefits which are vested in it. We have already said that the quintessence of 'animal' is man, the [rational] living being capable of speech (*mardum-i nāṭiq-i zindah*). The benefits of man are manifest. They are the amazing crafts that man invented with his intellect, his subtle intelligence and his sheer skill. The whole purpose of creation ended up with man, and after man, no form appeared in creation that [would have] surpassed man in nobility. Necessarily, [therefore] the quintessence of man lies in uttered thoughts (*sukhan*). However, all the thoughts uttered by humans during one Cycle are like milk which, once milked, is beaten in a skin so that butter is formed as a result. The result of the utterances of humans during one Cycle, being of the subtle nature [of the quintessence], is, then, difficult to comprehend for one man, but [its enunciation] is facilitated for the tongue of him who thereby is capable of accepting the task of a Prophet, and because this is so, that enunciation will settle in the hearts of his people, for this enunciation is the quintessence of those thoughts uttered by them in their own gatherings. As a result, to hear it is agreeable for the ear, because they are familiar with those tones. This is how prophethood of Prophets is facilitated. Understand this!<sup>1</sup>

##### VI. 1.2.

There is still another meaning to this. The Creator knows what is to the advantage of his servants, and what they need in view of an auspicious administration of this world. For this purpose, he made manifest firmly tied knots in the celestial bodies, each knot facing a specific individual, so that, whenever it was the right time for a noble [human] to be born, He would open one of those knots. As a result, noble powers coupled with auspiciousness and virtues would continuously reach the

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1. Cf. *Wellsprings*, para. 164.



person so fortunate. [This] possessor of charisma (*khudāwand-i karāmat*) would, then, at all times contemplate in himself something of the luminosity of the spiritual world (*‘ālam-i malakūt*) and of the overwhelming power of the divine (*jabarūt*), becoming thereby capable of receiving the word of God and of being acquainted with that divine Law (*sharī‘at*) which contains both the colours of the spiritual [world] and the dispositions pertaining to administrative laws, so that those accepting it will be of blessed destiny just as those rejecting it will be of cursed destiny. Understand this!

VI. 1.3.

There is still another way to see how prophethood is facilitated for Prophets, namely, by way of the manifestation of the activity of Intellect, for everything, from the beginning of Creation to its end, has its [proper] activities.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the elements and the celestial bodies manifest their activities in the beings pertaining to the realm of natural generation. Soul’s intention is active in the plants and the animals, and Soul’s proper activity is manifest in Man, in view of the spoken Word (*sukhan*). In sum, then, nothing in creation had an unfulfilled desire to deploy its activity, except for Intellect’s desire [to exercise] lordship and glory. Among all possible activities, nothing indeed would befit Intellect except manifestation of domination and deployment of glory; and this lordship, glory and domination must be such as to dominate the most eminent of all things, which is Man. Thus, lights were pouring forth from Intellect, and then, an individual body (*shakhs*), having the most complete harmony, the most subtle natural constitution and the most perfect disposition, was fashioned from Nature and Soul in such a way that [this individual] was capable of receiving the spiritual support of Intellect (*ta’yīd-i ‘aql*). As a result, these blessings reached Soul and Nature, and [the manifestation of] their good and sacred qualities was facilitated, and many things appeared from there. This is how prophethood of Prophets is facilitated. Understand this!

*Issue Two: That prophethood overpowers discourse and the professionals of discourse*

VI. 2.1.

Prophethood overpowers [mere discourse] because it is single and without equal in its time, whereas discourse occurs among men who are equals. Therefore, the person endowed with prophethood is confident of the message that reaches him, and he knows that it does not reach anyone other than himself so there might be dispute and contradiction between himself and that other person. [By contrast], the professionals of discourse are many in the world, and there is much contradiction and dispute because of their multitude. One group, then, wishes to approach

1. Read *kār-kardanhā’ist* (Persian text p. 70, line 19).

Prophets, seeking to contradict them and [presuming] by virtue of that speech to be their equals, while another group is incapacitated before the Prophet due to the inimitable quality of the prophetic message. Those [presuming] to be his equals by virtue of discourse cannot dominate him because the prophetic message he has is more than speech; rather, it is he who dominates them. Understand this!

*Issue Three: Why the later Prophet confirms the truthfulness of the earlier Prophet*<sup>1</sup>

VI. 3.1.

Should a later Prophet disown an earlier Prophet, claiming that prophethood belongs to him [alone], that no Prophet will come after him, and that there was no Prophet before him, people will disown him even more. His work will turn out to be more difficult, and people will have stronger arguments against him. But if he confirms the truthfulness of the earlier Prophet, he will be strong in accomplishing his prophetic task because he will say, 'Before me, there was one who proclaimed the same Call that I am proclaiming'. He will have a proof against those who disown him, saying [to them], 'Why do you disown my prophethood when I am proclaiming the same Call that was proclaimed by him who was before me and when I am following the same Path he was following?' For this reason, it is necessary that the later Prophet confirm the truthfulness of the earlier Prophet. Understand this!

VI. 3.2.

Furthermore, Prophets are like the members of [one body, i.e.] prophethood, for prophethood will not stand good unless its members and limbs are a perfect whole. Whenever a deficiency appears in one member, this deficiency will affect most of the other members, for prophethood has no firm standing unless that member is [also] perfect. And if a later Prophet does not confirm the truthfulness of an earlier Prophet, he will have made inoperative a member of his own [body] and introduced a weakness. Understand this!

VI. 3.3.

Further, there is a common ground and likeness (*mushākilāt*) between two Prophets that succeed one another. Both have truth by virtue of [their] spiritual essence being one and the same (*bi-yikī-i ḥaqīqat*), for the rank of the preceding prophetic messenger is like the stage of potentiality, and the rank of the succeeding prophetic messenger is like the stage of actuality; nothing comes ever to the stage of actuality unless it has been in the stage of potentiality. Therefore, it is necessary for that prophetic messenger who comes next, since he is at the stage of actuality, to confirm the truthfulness of the one who is at the stage of potentiality. For if he

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1. For this theme, cf. *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, 162–166.

disowns him, he disowns his own potentiality from which he evolved to the stage of actuality; if he disowns his own potential, his effectiveness will be weakened; if his effectiveness is weakened, his words will not settle in the hearts of the people of his community. But if the later prophetic messenger confirms the truthfulness of the one before him, it will be necessary for the Prophet who comes next to confirm his truthfulness as well. Thus, it is necessary for that Prophet who comes last to confirm the truthfulness of all the Prophets prior to him. Understand this!

VI. 3.5.

There is yet another major and subtle reason for the later Prophet to confirm the truthfulness of the earlier Prophet, which is the following: Many later Prophets lived under the Law of earlier Prophets and acted for some time under that Law, and [then] reached prophethood [themselves]. If [such a Prophet] would give the lie to the one under whose Law he had himself been acting, he would be weakening his own person and would debase himself, since he had accepted the truthfulness of that [earlier] person as long as prophethood did not [yet] belong to him. He would become suspect in his own prophethood, and bad thoughts would come up regarding himself, since he [would have to admit that he] accepted the truthfulness of someone without having knowledge of his truthfulness and was deluded by someone who cheated him. Indeed [the later Prophet] must not allow any doubt to come up in him with regard to the noble quality he saw in himself while living in obedience of [the earlier Prophet,] having then accepted his truthfulness by acting under his Law and worshipped God under that religion. This way, he will be safe from bad thoughts and will eliminate the talk of the adversaries (*sukhanān-i dīddān*) from his person. Therefore, it is necessary for the later prophetic messenger to confirm the truthfulness of the earlier prophetic messenger. Understand this!

*Issue Four: Why the preceding Prophet announces the following Prophet*

VI. 4.1.

By announcing the prophetic messenger following him, the preceding prophetic messenger [in effect] announces himself. This is so because the preceding Spiritual Rank (*ḥadd*) is in comparison to the subsequent one like something that exists *in potentia*, while the subsequent prophetic messenger is like something that exists *in actu*, as we have already said; something that exists potentially desires to attain the rank of actuality. Thus it is in view of the desire of the possessor of potentiality to evolve in actuality that he announces the Prophet after him. Understand this!

## VI. 4.2.

Moreover, if the preceding prophetic messenger disowned the prophetic messenger coming after him, [this would mean that] the preceding prophetic messenger would be forever more excellent and more eminent, and that the particular Law and the Book which he brings would be [forever] more perfect and more luminous. Also, if he did not announce the one after him, the willingness of the people to embrace his religion would be weak. Therefore, if he does announce the coming of that Spiritual Rank (*hadd*)<sup>1</sup> after himself, they are willing to embrace his own religion most warmly, and they will expect the advent of that Spiritual Rank after him, for the latter is to have far more lights of the spiritual domain (*anwār-i malakūt*) than he has. Consider for example someone inviting people to a feast, preparing food and drink of many kinds, and saying to them, 'If you are eager to come to my feast and willingly consume my food, I shall give you another feast, better than this!' they will be eager to come for the sake of the other feast. Understand this!

*Issue Five: That the proof of God is not established with one Prophet alone*

## VI. 5.1.

God most exalted made it imperative to pay attention to [His] proof (*ḥujjat*) and to send Prophets, but you must know that he did not privilege any one Prophet. The reason for this is that time does not remain unchanged; rather, it rotates and causes the [human] creatures to change accordingly, due to the motion of the stars in the skies and the fact that in their rotation they travel through the signs of the zodiac and the degrees [of the Sphere]. In sending the Prophets, God has no purpose other than the benefit [of the humans]. He does it not in order to remove any disadvantage from Himself but for the sake of that rule (*siyāsat*) which will be best for the humans so they will have a permanent standing (*pāyandagī*) in this world and the other. Now, if what we have established is true, and time does not remain unchanged, it follows that the rules must vary just like time, and [since] the world is in rotation and the moral norms (*khūyḥā*) of the people in this changing world turn in various ways, it follows that there must be a ruler for each rule specifically since each rule is different. And it is not possible that different rules have one and the same ruler, for if one and the same person were to manage all the rules, he would be unable to lead the affairs of everybody to their achievement and could not take care of all. In effect this would amount to approving of lawlessness and giving up the choice of the best option. It is for this reason that the proof of God is not established with one Prophet alone. Understand this!

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1. Probably an allusion to the coming of the *qā'im*, or the 'Lord of the Final Rising' (cf. VI. 7.1.-4.).

## VI. 5.2.

Another point: Had God sent no more than one Prophet, it would be inconceivable that [this] one Prophet alone would have come with all the Laws and would have realized all the spiritual realities (*ḥaqīqathā*) that He deposited at the top of the Laws, and that he would have grasped the meanings alluded to in the Books [that came] over the tongue of the subsequent Prophets. That which was allotted to the prior Prophets is only a little of the lights from the spiritual dominion of God, the rules of administration [of this world], the Books and the Laws of the later Prophets, who were privileged to find the way to the spiritual dominion of God. And the word of God is the proof of God for the servants of God. If this were not so, this would amount to invalidation of the proof of God—but God does not invalidate his own proof. Rather, he keeps his own proof valid and manifests it so as to reduce the invalid to nothing. Thus it has been verified that the proof of God is not established with one Prophet alone. Understand this!

## VI. 5.3.

On the other hand: Had God not brought forth Prophets, and had He postponed [this] until the Seal of the Prophets came forth, whom He would [then] have graced with the clearly-spoken Qur’ān and the Law of the true religion (*sharī‘at-i ḥanīfī*), the people of the earlier periods would have been in want of the proof of God, and God would have rendered invalid his own proof for a long time. Therefore, since it is inconceivable that God would render his own proof invalid forever or for a long time, sending out Prophets was a necessity [for Him] in the past times, and is so, likewise, in the remaining times. Thus it has been verified that the proof of God is not established with one Prophet alone. Understand this!

*Issue Six: Why descent [from Heaven] is kindred to Jesus, among all the Prophets*

## VI. 6.1.

The meaning of the kinship [indicated] in Jesus’ descent from Heaven to Earth is this: In Christ (*masīḥ*), the image (*mithāl*) of Adam became a visible event (*dīdār*),<sup>1</sup> for he gave<sup>2</sup> from that tree from which [Adam] had been debarred. Indeed, while spreading the True Knowledge and the Wisdom, which was transmitted among his disciples, Jesus did not alter the Law of Moses except that he changed the Sabbath to Sunday. His constant concern was to give his disciples [the capacity to see] ‘colour’—that is, the colours of the spiritual [world], up to the moment when he left this world. But the preestablished ‘measuring’ (*taqdīr*) of God was such that

1. Cf. Qur’ān 3:59.

2. MS. Cairo reads *bi-chashīd* for *bakhshīd* of the edited Persian text (p. 79, line 15); MS. Tehran could be read either way.

the previous Law should be abrogated and a new Law should appear. Thus, after Jesus, one heptad among the [successive] heptads passed by, and the preestablished 'measuring' came true from among the people living during the Cycle inaugurated by him, that is, the codification of the Law attributed to Jesus, which is the one that is now in the hands of the Christians. Yet God has [also] given an account of Christ to the effect that he is the sign of the Final Rising of Liberation (*nishān-i rastakhīz*), which means that whatever Knowledge and Wisdom Christ revealed to his disciples, that Knowledge belongs [properly] to the Lord of the Final Rising of Liberation (*khudāwand-i rastakhīz*). [Therefore,] the descent of Jesus from Heaven signifies that the Knowledge and Wisdom revealed by Jesus will be manifest to the Lord of the Final Rising (*khudāwand-i qiyāmat*). Indeed in some traditions it is said that the Mahdī will be Jesus son of Mary ('Īsā-yi Maryam), which means that that which Jesus imagined about himself, the preestablished 'measuring' of that, will come true with the Mahdī. This is why the descent [from Heaven] is kindred to Jesus, among all the Prophets.<sup>1</sup>

## VI. 6.2.

Another possible meaning of this is the following: Each one among the Prophets was granted triumph over his enemies so that his rule could stand, except Jesus, who indeed experienced hardship from his enemies and left this world without having received any help against his enemies. So, God promised the Final Rising (*qiyāmat*) to grant him triumph, and He will call him to arise (*bar angīzad 'ū rā*) with victory and in triumph. Understand this!

## VI. 6.3.

Furthermore, Christ is kindred to the Spirit of God and the Word of God, for it was blown into Mary so he would grow and be born. You should know that all the religious Laws are like bodies for the Word of God, and the Word of God is like the Spirit animating all the religious Laws. Now God promised that the Final Rising will be close to the descent of Jesus, that is to say, the descent of the Word of God, so that the religious Laws shall be alive, and their benefits will appear, and that whatever inner realities and secrets are hidden in the religious Laws come out into the open. This is what is meant by the descent of Jesus from Heaven. Understand this!

*Issue Seven: Why the Lord of The Final Rising is kindred to the Mahdī*

## VI. 7.1.

The Mahdī is the one who shows humans the Path. All the Prophets before him guided humans to the Path of God, but their words were veiled, and their Sciences

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1. Cf. *Wellsprings*, paras 143–46.

were hidden because the times required this. But once the process has reached its end and the lifting of the veils has come near and the Cycle of Unveiling (*dawr-i kashf*) has arrived, clear proofs will come out into the open, and well-ordered signs of that will appear. The person who will appear then will guide the humans without [having recourse to] veils and symbols, and he will unveil to them all of the [True] Knowledge that had been in the religious Laws and the [prophetic] Books, and every Wisdom and Mystery that had been hidden. The name of that person [i.e., Mahdī] is derived from [the root] HDY [to guide], which implies that there is no way for anyone to avoid him and his Call (*da'wat*), or to escape from his arguments and proofs, because he guides the humans to that which is in their own inner reality (*ḥaqīqat-i īshān*) and shows the way to those sciences to which 'the Horizons and the Souls'<sup>1</sup> bear witness and opens the way for the souls to know the spiritual dominion of God, so that the souls become one with the True Realities (*ḥaqāyiq*) and the Spiritual Support [of the 'chosen ones', *ta'yīd*]. Then all will be peace and joy, and all the stubborn will join the religion of God out of their own choice, eagerly and truly, and offer their obedience. This is why the Lord of The Final Rising is kindred to the Mahdī. Understand this!

## VI. 7.2.

It is said that when the Mahdī comes, wolf and sheep will drink water in one and the same place. 'Wolf' means the adversary (*didd*), those who harm the friends of God (*awliyā'-i khudāy*) and confront them with hostility, while 'sheep' means a person with whom [they,—or people generally] feel confident and in whose goodness they place their hope. In this sense, then, there will be agreement between the adversary and the friend [of God] due to the power of the Lord of the Final Rising. That they 'drink water' [in the same place] means that there will be agreement between them in Knowledge, Wisdom, and Unveiling of the True Realities.<sup>2</sup>

## VI. 7.3.

Further, it is said that the Mahdī will kill Gog and Magog. This means that during the time and Cycle of the Lord of the Final Rising those who strayed from the Path and stuck to corrupt creeds will be put to death. The 'spilling of their blood' [means that] the doubt will be removed from their hearts and souls. After that, 'justice will be spread and tyranny will be abolished'. That is, the justice which is Knowledge will be spread, and the tyranny which is Ignorance will be abolished.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. Qur'ān 41:53.

2. Cf. *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, p. 168f.

3. For the 'spreading of justice' see above, IV. 4. 2.

## VI. 7.4.

Further, the souls during the Cycle of Concealment (*dawr-i satr*) may be likened to a serious illness affecting the body, and the Cycle of Unveiling (*dawr-i kashf*) may be likened to the state of health that one hopes for when leaving the illness behind. The Lords of the Cycles of Concealment may be likened to the physicians who cure the sick. Now by God's preestablished 'measuring', the period of time appointed for these sick ones was a total of seven cycles, and at the completion of these seven cycles the illness was to leave these afflicted ones. The Lord of the First Cycle [*khudāwand-i dawr-i pīshīn*, i.e. Adam] may be likened to the kind of physician who prevents the sick from eating anything, as do the physicians of India. The Lord of the Second Cycle is rather like the physician who prescribes drugs, and the Third and the Fourth, up to the Seventh, may be compared to those physicians who prescribe, each in his turn, an appropriate medical treatment. When it comes to the Lord of the Final Rising, he liberates them from the fetters of illness altogether, introduces them to his own norm, his own food and drink, and brings them to the state of health. And that is the sign of the Mahdī, while those [medical treatments] are the benefits [derived from] the sciences and wisdoms of one who guides mankind towards the Mahdī and Lord of the Cycle of Unveiling. It is in this sense that the Lord of the Final Rising is kindred to the Mahdī. Understand this!<sup>1</sup>

**Discourse Seven: On Bringing to Mind the Sixth Creation  
[i.e., the 'Call to Arise']**

*Issue One: That Calling to Arise is coupled with Existing*

## VII. 1.1.

Be aware that it has been transmitted from among the sayings of the wise of [all] religions that Soul is a Form arisen (*bar-angikhtah*) from the First Intellect; indeed it is named 'the Second Intellect' for this reason. You also should know that in the language of the Arabs, 'calling to arise' (*bar angikhtan*) means 'calling into existence' (*būdan kardan*). As Abū Ya'qūb [i.e., Sijistānī, presumably in the Arabic original text] puts it, *al-inbi'āth* (arising, originating, emanation) is the *infi'āl* (passive or reflexive form) of *al-ba'th* (arousing, awakening, resuscitation, resurrection); *al-munba'ith* (the one arising) is *al-munfa'il* (present participle active), and *al-mab'ūth*

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1. Cf. *Kitāb ithbāt al-nubuwwāt*, pp. 181–193; Wilferd Madelung, 'Das Imamāt in der frühen ismailitischen Lehre', *Der Islam*, 37 (1961), pp. 43–135, esp. p. 109. The cyclical theory outlined in our text is peculiar since it implies that the 'cycle of unveiling', i.e., the cycle inaugurated by the 'Lord of the Rising' or the *qā'im*, is no longer identical with the seventh (as is classical Ismaili doctrine, including Sijistānī's own in most of his works), but comes after it (cf. *Introd.*). Note, however, the 'preventive medicine' of Adam; this may reflect Sijistānī's (and Nasafī's) 'radical' doctrine that Adam did not bring a *sharī'ah*.



(the one made to arise, awakened, resuscitated, resurrected) is *al-maf‘ūl* (past participle passive). Therefore, since Soul is a Form arisen (*bar angīkhtah*) from Intellect—for it is due to the reflection of Intellect that it came into being-there—it follows that the dead must be called to arise; indeed Intellect’s self-reflection rests on this point. It further follows from there, for those of fine understanding, that Calling to Arise (*bar angīkhtan*) is forever coupled with Existing (*būdan*), which means that Becoming (*kawn*) is always coupled with the Awakening (*ba‘th*). In sum, then, from the reflection of Intellect, Soul is called to arise; the latter causes the continuance (*baqā’*) of Nature, and from this in turn the beings generated by it (*mutawallidāt-i ‘ū*) exist. Thus it has been verified that Becoming is coupled with the Awakening, which means that Calling to Arise is coupled with Existing. Understand this!

## VII. 1.2.

Further, things are primordially ‘measured’ in Creation, so they will not depart from that formation (*khilqat*) under which they came into being-there, due to the preestablished ‘measuring’ (*taqdīr*) of their Creator and Existentiator, and no thing is ever separated from its own likeness (*shakl*), nor from its opposite. All like things are linked with each other, and so are the opposites, in view of the intermediaries which share a likeness with every two opposites. Now, the Call to Arise has either the likeness of Death, or is its opposite. If it has the likeness of Death, it is inseparable from it and will not be removed from it. If, on the other hand, it is the opposite of Death, there must be an intermediary; between them which shares a likeness with both sides, with Death and with Calling to Arise. But the Call to Arise is indeed the opposite of Death, so there must be an intermediary; and there is no common ground that would be an intermediary encompassing both sides, Calling to Arise and Death, except the living beings who are bound to die. Thus, Calling to Arise is inseparable from Existing, which means that the Awakening is inseparable from Becoming. Put in a better way, it means that if there is Existing, then there is Calling to Arise, and if there is Calling to Arise, then there is Existing. Thus it has been verified that Calling to Arise is coupled with Existing, which means that Becoming is coupled with the Awakening. Understand this!

## VII. 1.3.

Further, to exist is to find again the life which had disappeared from the living person, just as being called to arise is to find again the life which had disappeared from the dead person. This way, death is [paired] with life, and being called to arise with being dead. Put another way, there is a Call to Arise for the living as there is a Call to Arise for the dead. Understand this!

## VII. 1.4.

Further, the Call to Arise is based on a fundamental point: that reward reaches the humans of good, and that punishment get hold of the humans of evil. Likewise, Existing is based on a fundamental point: that fortunate destiny reach the well-fated and that unfortunate destiny get hold of the ill-fated. Now, since in view of 'reaching' and 'getting hold of' happiness or misery, the two—Becoming and the Awakening—have been assimilated, we know that they are coupled together and are inseparable. From this point of view, [too], it has been verified that the Awakening is coupled with Becoming, which means that Calling to Arise is coupled with Existing. Understand this!

*Issue Two: That to think that the multitude will be resuscitated is contrary to the truth*

## VII. 2.1.

Thinking about [the number of] those humans that lived during one Cycle, according to common understanding, how long would it take to arrive at the [correct] number for the Cycle of Adam?—and that by itself lasted for seven thousand years! And after Adam, the world is seen to be filled with humans at each period. So, when any of these populations reaches the end, the world is again filled to replace them with creatures after them. If these creatures are added up by counting seven thousand years [per period], the [total] number of these humans will be beyond counting—not to mention those populations that existed prior to Adam!—and this calculation will end up in sheer nonsense and ignorance. Under these assumptions, if such a multitude would have to be resuscitated, the part allotted to each individual from that which had been flowing forth upon them from the Intellect would appear to be small, and the benefits would be little indeed! Thus, to think that the multitude will be resuscitated is contrary to the truth. Understand this!

## VII. 2.2.

In other ways, too, resuscitation of the multitude would imply much iniquity, for there were among the peoples of the past unweaned children and fools deprived of reason, who cannot be held responsible for retribution. And what about those people who live in the outermost regions of the earth, such as the Africans, the Turks and the people of Sind? If they were resuscitated while having acquired no [merit] from knowledge and action, how could they gain eternal reward? And if they were punished, this would not befit the mercy of the Creator, for the mercy of the Creator is not an idle matter. The mercy of the Creator is great; it is Wisdom, and it has reached every thing. Thus it has been verified that they would not be included in resuscitation [supposed to] take place at the gathering of the multitude.

Therefore, they and those before them are called to arise in such a way as is necessary and befitting. Understand this!

VII. 2.3.

Moreover, to assume that the multitude will be resuscitated [entails another problem]. It is beyond dispute that all individuals are called to arise with the body. There is indeed no disputing this, for to invent spirits without bodies, and to rule that this must be so is a major imposture. Now if we assume, with regard to the [people of the] preceding cycles, that all these will be assembled in one place, the four elements will not be enough to make up their bodies, so that a surplus will be needed for them in God's creation, but a surplus in God's creation is something inconceivable. And even supposing one element to be sufficient for their bodies, what thing would there be for them to stand on? All of the earth would then be used up for the bodies, but this material would have to be of such proportions that a surplus would be left for the bodies [to stand on]! Thus, to think that the multitude will be resuscitated is contrary to the truth. Understand this!

*Issue Three: That information about the Call to Arise is hidden from the soul*

VII. 3.1.

Know that the soul does not by itself or alone possess that experience (*ma'rifat*) that would enable it to grasp its own substance. Knowledge and experience are in man at that time at which [the soul] is adjoined to a natural body whose senses are free from deficiencies. Once the soul leaves one among the human bodies, this knowledge of experience goes into hiding; it is deposited in a place where human experience cannot establish itself. Now for every period of time and every moment there are sources of theological discourse in appropriate order, that is, continuously and appropriate to each; [those sources, i.e., Prophets and Imams, being each time] the entrance to fundamental and derived sciences. If the information (*ma'rifat*) of the former [or: gained from the first source] were mixed up with the information of the latter [or: gained from the last source], then there would be adding up<sup>1</sup> of that information which should be held in isolation. To this end, information about the Call to Arise is hidden from the soul. Understand this!

VII. 3.2.

Whoever knows the substance of his own soul, knows it by virtue of its experiences (*bi-ḥaqq-i ma'rifathāyash*) and the noble status of its inner realities. Having disentangled his soul from extension in material space and measurable bodies, he knows

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1. Translation of *bā ma'rifat* (Persian text p. 87, line 13) uncertain. Corbin seems to have conjectured the reading *nā-ma'rifat* in his translation (*Le Dévoilement*, p. 181).

that the soul is a luminous substance which has been coloured by spiritual colours such as those words passed on which had once been composed [by Prophets, *ta'lif kardah*],<sup>1</sup> chants proffered, harmonies sensed. He is aware of the fact that the soul comes down, leaves, moves onward and [again] enters the path, but he does not search for information about the Call to Arise, for this is hidden behind veils, and only God knows it. And whoever thinks of the soul as a substance extended in matter or as a measurable body, is searching the soul for what is not in its substance and [therefore] remains in error and brings about his own perdition. Such a person has only the choice between the following [useless] options: either he will think that Soul is dispersed and scattered through the life of the bodies, or [he will think of] a materially extended and measurable substance in which it inheres, or that it survives without a body. But he will find no proof for such a doctrine except rhetorical persuasion, that is, the kind of satisfaction gained from blind imitation, as is the custom of our adversaries. Or he will opt for the transmigration (*tanāsukh*) of the souls in the bodies in such manner as is believed by the feeble and ignorant ones. But God in his transcendent Power and subtle Knowledge is far beyond any feebleness and ignorance. Therefore, information about the Call to Arise is hidden from the soul.

## VII. 3.3.

Further, [were this information not hidden,] hope and fear of humans, on which the spiritual health of both worlds depends, would be annulled, for there is a Call to Arise which carries an individual to a higher degree, as there is one which carries a person to a lower degree. If the person knows that God makes him reach a higher level at the time of the Call to Arise, he will lose his chance to acquire [merit] and thus miss that noble rank and his own elevation. Therefore, not to be informed about the Call to Arise is necessary for this reason, [too,] so that hope and fear remain constant and, as a result, God may enact justice on the souls in a manner suited to them and appropriate to their actions. To this end, information about the Call to Arise is hidden from the soul. Understand this!

*Issue Four: That the Call to Arise implies discipline of the soul*

## VII. 4.1.

Inasmuch as acquisition of Knowledge implies spiritual discipline (*riyāḍat*) of the souls, it means for them to get rid of evil disposition in order to apprehend their own substance and to be purified from every vileness. And Knowledge is called to arise in the soul through the learning process by which a disciple learns from a teacher. Through this learning, which means discipline for the soul, the latter

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1. For *ta'lif*, see *Wellsprings* Para. 10.

receives the power to ascend in order to apprehend the Mysteries and to realize the Sciences it learned from its teacher, until, due to that Knowledge, it reaches a point such that someone having seen that person before would believe he is another person. Because of the magnificent, pure and subtle nature [of that Knowledge], this person will have reached in his own substance so much power and eminence that it is beyond measure. He will know, then, that this eminence and excellence did not come to him from Nature, but from the fact that his substance had been attracting the quintessences of the souls which [already] had pure essence and subtleness of Knowledge. Thus it has been verified that the Call to Arise implies discipline of the soul. Understand this!

## VII. 4.3.

Further, association with the wise and those who know implies discipline of the soul for a man, so he can benefit from them thanks to a purified substance. He will educate himself in their ways, follow the path which is theirs, and accord his life with theirs, so that his soul acquires the discipline to shun vice and to desire virtue. This process of his acquiring a refined soul may happen in the very same body that was there at the beginning. But, if it happens that his soul is adjoined to a more harmonious body, further removed from evil and closer to good, his discipline will have been more vigorous, his acquisition of refinement more obvious. Understand this!

May God facilitate the discipline for the Call to Arise to the people of Truth, by His grace!

*Issue Five: That in view of the Call to Arise, ill-fated may turn well-fated and well-fated may become ill-fated*

## VII. 5.1.

Be aware that it often happens that ill-fatedness is induced when the student falls into the hands of a teacher who is in error and gone astray, who presents his own error as attractive to the student and influences him with ignorance, so that, after having known the way, he gets disoriented and, having had Knowledge, he becomes an ignorant person. But it also happens frequently that an ill-fated person finds a wise and pure man of Knowledge who guides him to the path of religion and of the other world, so that, after having been in error, he finds the right path and, after ignorance, becomes wise. Therefore, the one to whom God grants association with good guides must thank God and must strive, with good action and good doctrine, for that which elevates him, for, inasmuch as he endeavours to do good deeds and to acquire uncontaminated doctrine, what he thus gains from the men of Knowledge and the Wise will be inseparable from him after he leaves the body, at the time of

the Call to Arise. He will meet great felicity as counterpart (*mushākil*) of his own soul due to the struggle for good he had undertaken, for that is indeed the cause for his meeting great reward, as he had been promised.

VII. 5.2.

On the other hand, he who neglected to observe those matters of Knowledge that had been given him and of which he had been made aware, and who allowed himself to be deluded by errors and by what he was induced to by that teacher gone astray, will meet, after he leaves the body, those ills which are the counterpart of his own soul. And this is due to his negligence and carelessness, for that is indeed the cause for his meeting punishment. So, well-fated may become ill-fated, and ill-fated may turn well-fated, in view of the Call to Arise. Understand this!

*Issue Six: That the Call to Arise may be extended over a long or a short period*

VII. 6.1.

Be aware that long or short periods of time apply to the Call to Arise, since it may happen that a disciple willing to follow the path finds the [right] master to guide him, as it may happen that a master gone astray captures an ill-fated ignorant disciple. Indeed, a disciple willing to follow the path may not find a master during his lifetime, as it also may happen that he finds many masters every year and every month. Or it may happen that an already lost disciple will not find anyone to assist him in his state of perdition, as it also may happen that he finds at every moment many persons in whose presence he could forsake his error. It even happens that, during a whole age, plenty of good masters are available and yet the ill-disposed who are in disorientation are also present in abundance. Inevitably, therefore, for the beneficial and corrupt sciences to be made to arise, there are long and short periods of time. Since this was a necessity, and may well [continue to] be so, as it now is, it is admissible that there is a shorter and a longer Calling to Arise. But the Knowledge of this is with the One Powerful [i.e., God].

VII. 6.2.

Moreover, it may happen that a master of those subtle esoteric sciences keeps them for himself and does not transmit them to anyone he finds unworthy. That he cannot find anyone worthy to receive the Knowledge will give him deep sorrow. If he finds a worthy person—be it an Abyssinian slave or a servant from Sind, he will disclose this subtle Knowledge and impart it to him, but if he cannot find anyone worthy to receive it, he will keep it secret even from his own children and family. Similarly, the Calling to Arise causes Prophets, Legatees, Imams, and ‘Proofs’ to arise in an order proportionate to the time of the Word and the degree (*ḥadd*) of appropriateness (*mushākilat*) and worthiness, and likewise it makes arise Pharaohs,

Tyrants, and Adversaries. For this reason, the Call to Arise may be long or short. Understand this!

VII. 6.3.

Further, it sometimes happens that when a master of Wisdom guides people and imparts his Knowledge to a person of understanding and intelligence, this Knowledge does not, then, stay with the latter but rather leaves him quickly, as it also happens that, having passed through the ear of that person, it stays within his heart. For with regard to the Call to Arise, God has secrets that are hidden behind a veil from the creatures of this world. The design in this secret is His. It is to Him that they return, and through Him that there is retribution and punishment. Understand this!

*Issue Seven: That noble action is of greatest benefit in view of the Call to Arise*

VII. 7.1.

You should know that the action of the noble has two parts: one is based on reason, the other on the religious law. The one based on reason is that you keep your hostility from humans, who are of your kind and share with you the conditions of a human being. Noble behaviour towards them, just as towards yourself, is an obligation for you on that journey on which your spiritual health (*ṣalāh*) depends, as well as that of humanity at large; it means that you have a keen desire for God and thank Him for those benefits that He made clear to you. As for the action based on the religious law, it means that a man be aware that the fulfilment of the religious duties enjoined on mankind is an obligation that applies to himself and his wishes and that in his dealings with humans he respect the obligations laid down in the religion of God as revealed through the Lords of the Cycles. And these two kinds of action—the one based on reason and the one based on the religious law—are of benefit in view of the Call to Arise, and keep harm from affecting the souls after death. We shall clarify this point with clear argument.

VII. 7.2.

Thus we say that the spiritual health of this world, its subsistence and the subsistence of those in it, depend on actions based on reason. If all men in the world behave in a manner opposite to this, corruption will be in the world, the civilization of mankind will be destroyed, and the cosmic order, on which everything that is noble, beautiful and pleasant in the world depends, will be abolished. In this case, harm will affect those persons who will be called to arise during the remaining cycles, just as the benefit resulting from noble action, on which the subsistence of the world depends, will affect those persons who will be called to arise during the remaining cycles. From this, it necessarily follows that noble action is of benefit in view of the Call to Arise. Understand this!

## VII. 7.3.

As for the noble action in terms of the religious law, it is connected with prosperity, evidence of blessing, and removal of ill-fatedness and misfortune. Therefore, once the humans settle on noble action in terms of the religious law, there will be plenty of good, evidence of blessing will be forthcoming, good fortune and divine favour will be constant, so that spiritual health in the world will be strong, and much good will reach those persons who will be called to arise during the last cycles, for this will have been caused by the noble actions adhered to. But in the same way, if they decide to neglect action in terms of the religious law, disregard the pillars of religion and are disposed to engage in vile action, there will be little evidence of blessing, lasting corruption and much adversity and evil. The corruption of the world will, then, become an enormous burden for the humans in the world, and abundant evil and harm will result from this for those persons who will be called to arise during the remaining cycles. Thus it has been verified that noble action is of greatest benefit in view of the Call to Arise. Understand this!

## VII. 7.4.

Further, [the works] of the noble enhance each other and form a whole of which each is an integral part and becomes one with the other, whether they are based on reason or on the religious law. If the intelligent and pious person engages in action regarding both the reasonable and the ordained, such as doing what is good, keeping one's hostility from humans and wishing them well, prosperity will adhere to him, his soul will become pure, and his intellect a source of luminosity, so that the soul is strengthened for the learning process, eagerly desires its return (*ma'ād*), and renounces pleasure in worldly things (*zāhid shawad dar in jahān*). Moreover, a person engaging in one ordained work will be keen on engaging in others as well, as he who frequently performs acts of purification and ablution will also do the prayer frequently, or he who spends his fortune for alms will also be eager to perform the pilgrimage personally. Therefore, given that the noble actions work in such a way that they give humans the power to seek virtue, and that a person having undertaken one part will be eager to engage in the other, and that there is no doubt that the desire for virtue benefits the soul, it has been verified that noble action is of benefit in view of the Call to Arise. Understand this!

## VII. 7.5.

Finally, he who engages in noble actions and refrains from vile things is in his own estimation more praiseworthy and more at peace with himself, and his sorrow and grief are diminished. By the same token, he who refrains from noble actions and does vile things is in his own estimation more blameworthy is haunted by misgivings, and his sorrow and grief are more severe. Clearly, the cause of his



scant knowledge and of his severe sorrow is not this world, for if it were so, the opposite would be the case: the sorrow and grief of bad people would be light, for they are the ones who have taken a big share from this world, and the sorrow and grief of the good people would be severe, for they are the ones who have taken a small share from this world. Indeed that sorrow and that grief of the [former] are in view of the other world; and the other world is the promise of the Call to Arise. Understand this!

## THE BOOK OF WELLSPRINGS

### *Kitāb al-yanābī'*

Translated for this volume by Latimah Parvin Peerwani from Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-yanābī'*, ed. H. Corbin in *Trilogie Ismaélienne* (Paris-Tehran, 1961), pp. 18–28, 41–43, 94–96. A complete annotated English translation of this text under the title *The Books of Wellsprings* may now be found in Paul E. Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom* (Salt Lake City, 1994), pp. 37–111.

### Tawḥīd

#### *Second Wellspring: On the pure being of the Mubdī'*

(22) The pure being related to the *Mubdī'* (the Principle of origination) that transcends being and not-being is indeed the act of being of the *Sābiq* [the First Intellect] derived from the act of being of the divine origination (*ibdā'*), which it bestows on it. In other words, the *Mubdī'* whom the *Sābiq* knows by the act of its being, its knowledge by the act of its being of the one who originated it becomes the being of the *Mubdī'* and not that a certain being is existent out there or a certain not-being is nonexistent outside of what manifested itself for the *Sābiq* from its act of being. That is because the *Mubdī'* is neither a 'being' like the beings of the originated things, nor a 'non-being' like the non-beings of the ipseities (*aysiyyāt*). Rather, His being [as He *qua* He] is to express the negation of beings and non-beings from the *Mubdī'*, may He be glorified.<sup>1</sup>

(23) If a being for the *Mubdī'* the Sublime is affirmed by the Intellect, then negating the beings and non-beings [from Him] would be beyond it. By what thing does the [First] originated being [or the Intellect] prove that? By its act of being which is the Intellect, or by its act of non-being which is the divine [act of] origination? If by its act of being it proves the being of the *Mubdī'*, whereas its act of being is

1. On al-Sijistānī's concept of *Mubdī'*, cf. P. E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 72–80.

the Intellect, then the *Mubdi*‘ would be the Intellect and the Intellect would be the *Mubdi*‘. Its conclusion would be: the [First] originated being is the *Mubdi*‘, and this is evidently absurd. If it proves the act of non-being of the [divine] Command, then how can the being be proved by the non-being? This is more absurd than the former.

(24) So beware of seeking a being beyond the *Sābiq* [Intellect] after the manifestation of the *Sābiq*. The Logos is its cause; it is also the first cause for the manifestation of the *Sābiq*, so when the *Sābiq* manifested itself, it united with it and became like the being of the *Sābiq*. It is this by which the *Sābiq* is singled out, and it has not effused it on its ‘caused one’ (*ma’lūl*), which is the Second [being, i.e., the Soul]. Whereas what is other than the pure being—the latter is united with its being—it has effused it on its ‘caused one’. God is more sublime than all the caused ones, both being and non-beings, and most exalted above them.

(25) Indeed we have negated all beings from the *Mubdi*‘, the Real, because every being requires a cause [for its existence], as we found [in the case of] the Intellect, the most noble of essences of beings. Its being also requires a cause, which is the Command of God, sublime be His glory. Whereas He, the *Mubdi*‘, the Real, does not have any cause, He is exalted above that so He does not require a being. If He does not require a being, then it is not requisite to negate that He is non-being. Therefore, beyond the non-beings there is no affirmation [or proof] of a thing that ‘it is’. So He is exalted above everything, and is sanctified beyond that which the heretics relate to Him.

### Intellect and Soul

#### *Fourth Wellspring: The realm of Intellect and the realm of Soul and their respective qualities*

(32) We find that the Natural World is similar to all the natural things, of which it consists, and what the natural things consists of being similar to the Natural World, this entails that the realm of Intellect and the realm of Soul also resemble each other. [In turn] these two, I mean, the Intellect and the Soul, are also similar to their respective realms. Then we find that both the [human] intellect and soul are part [of the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul respectively]. Now, it cannot be said with respect to each of them that they enter into [or are inside] (*dākhil*) the Natural World in the sense that a thing set up in it [is said to do]. Nor could it be said that they are outside (*khārij*) the Natural World in the sense of a substance encompassing the Natural World in a bodily sense.

The same is the case, we say, with the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul. It cannot be said with respect to them that they are inside or outside the world in the sense of an encompassing thing. Rather, they enter it in the sense of an exit, [or,

a leaving] and are outside it in the sense of an entry. We will explain to you this [matter] more thoroughly to make you understand.

(33) The knowledge of [the above matter] will be in respect of the [human] soul (*nafs*). You observe that [the *nafs*] enters the object of its knowledge in the moment of conception, [and] when it is through with that; it is outside that [thing]. In the same manner, you see the Intellect and the Soul are as if inside the Natural World, in a sense, at the moment of conceiving (*taṣwīr*) it and representing (*tashkīl*) it. On the other hand, they are outside of them, in a sense, when they are through with them at the completion [of the act of conception and representation].

It is impossible to conceive that outside the Sphere of spheres there is something that has distance (*masāfah*), because distances are in the spheres. If you imagine that outside the Sphere [of spheres] there is distance which pertains to the Soul and Intellect, then your imagination is false, unsound and corrupted. Rather, at times the distance between the purified particular soul and the Universal Soul is effaced. When the soul is not weary of its wayfaring (*sulūk*), then all kinds of happiness, joy, strength and continuous blessings accrue to it. This happens when it forgets the physical world and engages in the wayfaring toward its spiritual realm.

(34) The eminence of [the spiritual substance lies in that,] that nothing can cause its substance to cease unlike the other [nonspiritual substantial] things which eliminate each other, because a spiritual thing is not localized in a place which could subject it to elimination. So it is possible, in this respect, that the Natural World in its totality, including all its parts, is inside the realm of the Intellect and the realm of the Soul, without these two being eliminated [by it] in any way or, without any change or transformation entering into these two. That is because when the Originator (*Mubdi*) originated the First One [i.e., the Intellect], He did not leave anything outside of it, because He originated it as perfect without having any imperfection [in it]. If something had been left outside the Intellect, then the Intellect would have been imperfect according to the measure of its being veiled from the forms of things.

(35) Now if the [divine] act of origination (*ibdā*) could not have left anything outside the First Originated [i.e., Universal Intellect], then the Natural World would also be inside it without either eliminating it, or vieing with it, or causing any discomfort, calamity or loss to it by being inside it, because this Natural World has no worth (*miqdār*) before the spiritual world. Although the relationship between the individual soul and Universal Soul is extremely tenuous during [its] wayfaring to that luminous realm, in spite of that thin [relationship], it is able to forget this world. Since it can forget it, it has learnt that it does not possess any worth in spite of [the extremely] tenuous [relation of the individual soul with Universal Soul], and has no relationship with the spiritual world to be taken into consideration. So you should know this.

(36) One of the characteristics of the realm of Intellect and Soul is that, it is possible for it to imagine the greatest intellectual and imaginative distance. It is

possible that its intellectual and imaginative [imagination] be a point of imagination (*tawahhum*). [A situation of this sort would] correspond to [the geometrical case of] an infinite circle. This is so because an infinite circle is but a mere point [with an infinite radius].

Its other characteristic is that it is contrary to the Natural World from the point of potentiality and actuality, for the Natural World conserves the forms of the things born [i.e., the three kingdoms of mineral, plant and animal] in potentiality. When [a potential form] emerges to actualization; it is corrupted and made to return to its state of potentiality. However, the realm of Intellect preserves the forms which pertain to soul which have emerged to actualization. It holds them in their structure and in their substantiality. So you should know this.<sup>1</sup>

*Fifth Wellspring: The First Intellect is the First Originated-thing*

(37) Every encompassing thing is inevitably more eminent than [its] object of encompassing and precedes in existence; otherwise it would not be possible for it to encompass. Supposing the object of encompassing is anterior in existence to the encompassing thing, and the encompassing thing comes into existence posterior to the object of encompassing; then there will be a moment when the object of encompassing due to its anteriority would not be an object of encompassing, and there would be a moment when the object of encompassing due to the existence of the encompassing thing will be posterior to it.

(38) When I reflected on the Intellect, I found it perceiving [encompassing] the universality of things; therefore I ruled that it precedes in existence [and] is anterior to everything encompassed [by it]. If certain intellectual perceptions had been anterior to it [in existence], then those perceptions prior to the existence of the Intellect would not have been outside the perception of the Intellect. For it is impossible to suppose (*tawahhum*) that at times the Intellect perceives a certain thing and at times it does not because that supposition would imply that either that thing is intelligible, or that it is not intelligible. If it is intelligible, then the Intellect perceives it, if it is not intelligible [then] it is baseless [to assume] that an object of hypothesis is perceived but not by the Intellect. So no existing thing precedes the Intellect because it perceives [encompasses] everything. It is the perceiver and the object of perception, [whether it be] intelligible, imaginable or sensible. But God is more sublime and mighty than every act of perception, perceiver, and the object of perception. He is the most exalted beyond all things.

(39) Moreover, the Intellect resembles the number one which is first in numbers; no number, neither odd nor even, precedes it. Rather, all the numbers multiply [and proceed] from one and by one. In the same way, the Intellect is one and is

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1. Compare *Khwān al-ikhwān* of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, ed. Yaḥyā Khashshāb (Cairo, 1940), pp. 35–38.

the essence for all intelligibles. The intelligibles multiply [and proceed] from the Intellect and by the Intellect. Just as numerical multiplicity returns to [number] one which integrates all its parts, for one is found in [in every number whether it be] one thousand or ten thousand or any number after it or before it, and in every number there is number one, and [vice-versa] multiplicity is present in one. In the same way, all intelligibles in their totality return to the one intellectual knowledge. So the Intellect resembles one in these respects. Rather the numerical unity's effusion is on the numbers [due to which they multiply]. Then I found that one is the cause of [all] numbers and prior to all of them, that no number precedes it, [so I ruled that] for sure the Intellect is prior to all caused things (*ma'lūlāt*). It is [their] cause and nothing from among them precedes it. So you should know this.

(40) Also, God, exalted be His remembrance, has mentioned that His one command that originated the primordial things (*mubda'āt*), was [the order] '*kun*' (Be). It is an address to an addressee. It entails that the addressee is the one who comprehends it [in this form]; otherwise it is absurd that God addresses in the form of 'Be' to one who does not understand it. Since that is absurd, [then] it is admitted that He addresses one who comprehends it and that cannot be other than the substance of the Intellect for which it is possible to comprehend the address of the Creator, the Glorious and the Mighty. When the [divine] command proceeded to manifest the lower world, He expressed it as 'creation' (*khalq*) and 'bringing forth' (*taffīr*). For He said, 'He has created (*khalāqa*) the heavens and the earth and made darknesses and light' [Qur'ān, 6:1], and the Exalted one said, 'He has brought forth (*fāṭir*) the heavens and the earth' [Qur'ān, 6:14]. [He has addressed in this form] because the command addressed [in the form] of '*kun*' (Be) to the one who has no measure to receive it is absurd and impossible.

(41) In the same way, for the creation of our souls He used [the term] 'creation' (*takhlīq*), when He said in one of his *āyāt*, 'Verily We have created (*khalāqnā*) everyone from the dust' [Qur'ān, 20:5], and not the command in the form of 'Be' (*al-'amr al-kawnī*). [That will be the state] till we reach the level of the 'intellectuals', and have the intelligence of perceiving [the matters concerning] God and [the matters pertaining] to His Messenger, peace of God be upon him and his progeny. Then [only] such an address will be incumbent upon us, for His address is not imperative for the children who have no intelligence, just as [His address in the form of '*kun*' (Be) was imperative for the First Intellect. This is an indication that by the command of God, the Glorious and Mighty, there was the manifestation of the *Sābiq* (Preceder)<sup>1</sup> which is the First Intellect, and that nothing precedes it in the primordial origination (*ibdā'*), rather it is [anterior] to every thing. But sublime is the One who transcends all the attributes and relations. He is the most Exalted and Great.<sup>2</sup>

1. For al-Sijistānī's concept of Intellect (*Sābiq*) cf. P. E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, pp. 87–94.

2. Compare *Khawān al-ikhwān*, pp. 76–80.

*Sixth Wellspring: One cannot conceive of anything prior to the First Intellect*

(42) How can one conceive of a thingness (*shay'iyah*, or reality) prior to the Intellect when the Intellect is the thingness of all things, and the thingness of all things is the Intellect? If it is permitted to assume that certain thingness is prior to the Intellect when the Intellect is the thingness of all things, then the Intellect would be prior to itself (*dhāt*); but a thing is not prior to itself. Therefore, to assume a thingness to be prior to the Intellect is impossibility. Further, how can the primordial origination (*ibdā'*) be a thing prior to the Originated-thing (*mubda'*, i.e., the Intellect) and not a thing along with the Originated-thing? If it is admitted that with the Originated-thing prior to its manifestation, there is a thing but not the originated-thing, then it is admitted that a thing is originated and a thing is not originated in the sense of thingness. If that were to be the case, then the Creator has originated what is permitted to be other than the originated-thing in the sense of the thingness. If the primordial origination of the Originator is not the originated-thing, and the meaning of the thingness is existent in it, then the thingness has manifested along with the manifestation of the originated-thing and after it. So you should know this.

(43) Further, the meaning of thingness is the affirmation of a certain essence. Now, the essences are found to be either sensory or intelligible. As for the thingness of the objects of the sense; their affirmation is through the senses, and what the senses do not affirm, is affirmed conceptually by the Intellect. In the same way, the thingness of the intelligibles is [affirmed] by the Intellect. If the Intellect does not admit it then it is not affirmed, neither as an object of sense nor as an object of sensory intuition (*mawhūm*). And that which is not affirmed neither as an object of sense, nor as an object of sensory intuition, then its thingness also does not exist. So you should know this.

*Eighth Wellspring: That Intellect is quiescent*

(47) Any moving thing manifests its movement for [attaining] a thing that is quiescent. Nothing is anterior to the Intellect to make one imagine that there is motion in its substance to attain something quiescent which precedes it. Since nothing is anterior to the Intellect, then the Intellect is quiescent and motionless so that its quiescence perceives the motion of every physical and spiritual thing in motion.

(48) Also, the motion is for seeking something: either for seeking a place, or for seeking what the moving thing needs. But the Intellect has no need for anything that could move it for its search; nor is it displaced from its 'place' so that its displacement moves it to seek its own place. Because all the 'places' through the substantiality of Intellect are one place, and its inclining is equal toward all places. So to assume its movement for seeking a 'place' is absurd and impossible.

(49) If someone says, ‘[The Intellect] moves to seek its Originator (*Mubdi‘*); it needs to perceive It and encompass [or comprehend] It, and if the need is affirmed in it then the motion for it is [also] affirmed. Therefore we say the needy is in motion, and its motion is possible.’ We say: If the Intellect imagines that it can perceive its Originator and is needy of that [perception] then it will not be the Intellect. That is because the Intellect makes it incumbent to repel the imagination of perceiving [its] Originator, and the Intellect cannot contradict [what is ingrained] in its substance. Therefore, the Intellect cannot imagine perceiving who originated it because of its knowledge by its unity (*wahdat*).<sup>1</sup>

*Eleventh Wellspring: On the manner by which the Intellect addresses the Soul*

(57) The Intellect addresses the Soul in two addresses, one superior and one inferior. The inferior address concerns the physical things because of the attachment of the Soul to them and the compassion of the Intellect for [the Soul]. For if the Intellect abandons addressing it while it is still attached to the physical things, then an animated form which is a product of the Natural World cannot attain the completion of the form [requisite of the divine] wisdom. So when the Intellect addresses it after its attachment to the physical things, an animated form attains its perfection and is ordered according to its species under different genres attributed to it. The essence of its address to it is like what is manifested from its ‘caused ones’ (*ma‘lūlāt*) which is Nature and what is below it: the natural things. That is because, on investigation, you will find that none of them transgresses what the innate Intellect [within it] makes requisite for its mould and apparition (*shibh*). So it is understood that the Intellect addresses the Soul at first at the birth of matter and form then about how things should be ordered so that the eminence of [divine] wisdom is manifested. The effect of the address remains in the natural things (*tabī‘iyyāt*) eternally and forever.

(58) [This address] is also indicated by the Soul when it receives benefit from the Intellect. For it knows that when it creates order in Nature, it is due to the benefit [given] to it by the address of the Intellect when it is attached to [Nature]. If the Intellect does not give physical address to the Soul, the Soul cannot indicate any intellectual benefit. When the Soul employs [Nature for its activity] to attain the benefits of the Intellect, it is learnt that it is able to bring order in [Nature] due to the address of the Intellect to it; otherwise doing so would not have been possible for it. So this is the [nature of the] address of the Intellect to the Soul regarding physical things.

(59) The Intellect [gives] another address to the Soul regarding the physical things: it makes it aware of the insignificance of the natural physical things, and their mutual differences and contradictions. It also indicates to it that the benefits from its [Soul’s] world, which it has forgotten, are better and more eminent than

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1. Ibid., pp. 183–184.

these physical things of contradictory and contrary nature to which it is attached. It manifests itself to it to struggle in this world and to forget it, and long to rejoin its world and seek pure intellectual benefits by which it will attain its deliverance [from the bonds of physical things], accomplishment and contentment.

(60) As for the address of the Intellect to the Soul with respect to spiritual things, the foremost is the constant eternal yearning (*shawq*) which it effuses on it so that you see it perpetually yearning and being nostalgic for its Cause [from which it has emanated]. When it becomes conscious (*taṣawwur*) of the yearning effused upon it by the Intellect in order to turn toward it, you will see it cheerful, happy [and] oblivious to its attachment to Nature, nay, as if the traces of natural things had separated and withdrawn from it. [In such a state] it continues to attain [intellectual] benefits according to its capacity and comprehension. But when the difficulty of wayfaring makes it feeble then the exhaustion of fatigue drops from it with regard to the descent and not the ascent.

(61) The Intellect has another spiritual address to the Soul, and that is the effusion of incapacity (*ʿajz*) on it for obtaining all the benefits of the Intellect. So it, I mean the Soul, is [suspended] between [acquiring] yearning and incapacity from the effusion of Intellect due to its spiritual address to it. Therefore it continues to acquire yearning, and is halted by incapacity to wayfaring beyond its measure and degree. If it had effused only yearning on it without incapacity, then its essence (*dhāt*) would have been paralyzed (*baṭalat*) because it cannot encompass what it desires and the incapacity has not been effused on it from its Cause [to prevent it from transcending its limit]. Likewise, if only incapacity had been effused on it without yearning, [the Soul] would have remained imperfect, and would not have attained any benefits [from the Intellect], nor would it have known that both yearning and incapacity effused on it were deemed necessary [in the Intellect itself] for the purpose of negation and affirmation of the Originator. The negation is like incapacity and affirmation like yearning.

(62) When the Intellect desires to affirm its Originator, the 'negation' prevents it from conceptualizing 'how' (*kayf*, the Divine is), or any allusion [to Him] or [His] locatedness (*ayniyyah*). When it desires to negate [His existence], the 'affirmation' restrains it from conceptualizing His nonexistence (*taʿīl*) and denial. In this way motion and repose are manifested from it in the Soul: motion corresponds to yearning and repose to incapacity. From motion and repose there are manifested matter and form. Matter corresponds to yearning and form to incapacity, because matter perpetually yearns to receive a new form one after the other, whereas form restrains it from receiving another form simultaneously with it.

So this in brief is the mode of the address of the Intellect to the Soul, and [the manner by which] the Soul receives [benefits] from the Intellect.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 188–191.



*Twelfth Wellspring: On the manner of imagining the conjoining of benefits from the Intellect to the Soul*

(63) When the natural benefits inherent in the substance and nature of the spheres and stars rotating around the centre [of the earth] by the perpetual motions are conjoined to the 'offsprings' (*mawalid*, i.e., the three kingdoms: mineral, plant, animal), then due to that motion the natural forms possessing individuals are configured which are subject to generation and corruption, while they, I mean the spheres and stars, persist in their state, whereas the benefits from the Intellect to the Soul are by the perpetual quietude (*sukūn*) by which the Soul benefits from the Intellect so that by the conjoined benefits from the Intellect to the Soul, the eternal, enduring spiritual form [of the Soul] is configured. If the Soul does not benefit from complete quietude (*al-sukūn al-tāmm*) from the Intellect before receiving its benefits, then the benefits conjoined to it will be adulterated by the natural physical things which are subject to decline and mutation. Such benefits which are subject to decline according to the measure of their resemblance to the natural things possessing motion are not reliable.

(64) There has occurred difference in the views of those who possess Intellects and those who do inference due to [the measure of their quietude]. Each one of them infers and extracts [knowledge] according to the measure of quietude in his Soul benefited from the Intellect. If anyone from among them increases the receptivity for the quietude, he receives the Intellectual benefits [more], [and] his benefits would be more stable and less subject to decline. He whose receptivity to its quietude is least, his benefits is more subject to decline and least stable. He who attains complete quietude, his receptivity to its benefits is perfect, not subject to change and there is no decline in it. They are the *mu'ayyadūn* from God, the Mighty and Sublime.

(65) Let us return to what we intended to discuss in this Wellspring. We say: By the creation of the Intellectual quietude in the Soul, a number of Intellectual benefits are 'opened' in it which do not 'close' until the quietude is interrupted by its inclination toward transient natural things though that inclination may be very insignificant and the Soul does not reckon it. This [matter] will be clear to you during [your] reflection [on it]. Sometimes the 'opening' of the matters concerning Intellectual benefits are prolonged for you, and you 'ascend' to encompass them [or comprehend them] by an ascent which is spiritual and of the nature of light. But you find your Soul to be weak without [elapsing] any time and without [traversing] in space. You will know that it is with regard to it. The quietude which is a mount for the Soul for [its] inquiry has subverted from its hand due to its inclination toward natural things possessing transient contradictory motions. Sometimes a reflective person begins reflecting again on what was lost to him in encompassing what he was contemplating on, so [once again] he 'ascends' as he had done before according to the measure of help from Intellectual quietude. Again he finds his self (or soul) weak, as in the previous state because of non-quietude (*'adam al-sukūn*) due

to his inclination toward perpetually moving natural things. So according to this similitude the benefits from the Intellect conjoin with the Soul.<sup>1</sup>

*Sixteenth Wellspring: On the origination (ibdā') of the Intellect and the origination of a number of powers (quwwah)*

(76) One can imagine those powers [lit. things, coming into existence] along with the substantiality of the Intellect all at once, because in the substance of the [divine act] of origination (*ibdā'*) there is no retardation. They are divided into seven categories.

The first one is 'eternal duration' (*al-dahr*) which is an extension [of the Intellect] and can never separate from it. Every acquired intellect [i.e., human intellect, *al-'aql al-muktasab*], in order to perceive an intelligible, integrates with the eternal duration of that intelligible for its perception. So from this it is learnt that the absolute eternal duration is an extension of the *Sābiq* [i.e., the Intellect] at [its] origination and will be with it forever.

(77) The second is 'truth' (*al-ḥaqq*) which is its extension and never separates from it. The acquired intellect [of man] which perceives intelligibles contains the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of that thing, and its false conjecture [about anything] is contrary to it and futile for it. So it is learnt that the absolute truth was originated with the *Sābiq* at [its] origination and will be with it forever.

(78) The third is 'happiness' (*al-surūr*) which is its extension and never separates from it. Happiness exists in the acquired intellect when it encompasses an intelligible. So it is learnt that absolute happiness has been the extension of the Intellect at [its] origination and will be with it forever.

(79) The fourth is 'demonstration' (*al-burhān*) which is never delayed by the acquired intellect during its encompassing an intelligible. So from this it is learnt that demonstration has been an extension of the Intellect at [its] origination and will be with it forever.

(80) The fifth is 'life' (*al-ḥayāt*) which is found to exist simultaneously with the acquired intellect during the movement to encompass intelligibles. So it is learnt that the absolute life is an extension of the *Sābiq* at its origination without retardation from it and will be with it forever.

(81) The sixth is 'perfection' (*al-kamāl*). Perfection is not retarded from the particular acquired intellect [or human intellect] when it encompasses an intelligible, for it does not conjecture the intelligible to be imperfect but perfect during encompassing [it]. So it is learnt that perfection has been an extension of the *Sābiq* at its origination and will be with it forever.

(82) The seventh is 'self-subsistency' (*ghunyah*). Self-subsistency in the acquired

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1. Ibid., pp. 191–192.

particular intellect is actually existent when it encompasses certain intelligibles. So it is learnt that self-subsistency is an extension of the *Sābiq* at its origination, and will be with it forever. Among the powers of the Intellect that originated with it simultaneously, self-subsistency is most excellent and most eminent. If the *Sābiq* effuses self-subsistency from its powers on anyone, then that effusion is the most excellent and most exalted [of all the effusions].

(83) Among the most inferior in degree of the intellectual effusions is the effusion of eternity. Nevertheless, regarding the natural realities, it is most eminent because of its eternal duration. That is why God made it the treasurer of the motions pertaining to time.

(84) Under these powers multiple symbols are hidden but this is not the place to explain; otherwise we would have elucidated them. Each one of these powers has many ramifications which are innumerable and endless. Above these Intellectual powers that originated simultaneously with [the Intellect], it has other [powers] which can neither be described by the logical discourse nor by the [human] imagination because these are the powers [lit. things] which only the *Sābiq* possesses. We do not know when it will effuse by discharging on its 'caused one' (*ma'lūl*, i.e., the Soul) so that it would be possible for it to [manifest] them through expression, imagery, and stipulation. These are [the things] which are manifested in the course of cycles and periods about which only (the Intellect) knows, because all [these matters] in their totality are contained in it in a point which is the centre of the worlds. Blessed is He who is most powerful to manifest a substance such as [the Intellect] which is eminent and perfect. But God is exalted and loftier than all the relations and allusions.<sup>1</sup>

*Fortieth Wellspring: The manner by which ta'yīd (divine guidance or inspiration) conjoins the mu'ayyadūn in the physical world*

(186) The conjoining (*ittiṣāl*) of *ta'yīd*<sup>2</sup> to the *mu'ayyadūn*, in our physical world is nobler and subtler [in quality] than the conjoining of higher celestial powers (*quwwah*) to the lower 'offsprings' [*mawalid*, i.e., the three kingdoms of mineral, plant and animal]. That is because we find the powers from the spheres and stars are persistent in the natural born things without the born things being conscious of the mode of their conjoining. Then we find every member [of these three kingdoms] receives from the traces of their [celestial and astral] motions according to the measure of subtlety and density inherent in it, and accordingly produces

1. Ibid., pp. 150–152.

2. The term *ta'yīd* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *ayyada*. The notion of *ta'yīd* conveys the idea of divine assistance and inspiration which is a source of supernatural wisdom. This notion is derived from the two verses of the Qur'ān (2:87 and 253) in which God says about Jesus, 'We inspired him, *ayyadnāhu*, with the Holy Spirit'.

certain forms from the natural properties and powers latent in it. In the same way the divine assistance flashes (*lāmi'*) from the spiritual world.<sup>1</sup>

(187) We find that among living beings, man is the only one for whom it is possible to extract benefits from arts and crafts due to the aptitude inherent in him for that, give justice to everything, and produce admirable arts by which there is the perfection of the worlds and the manifestation of their beauty (*zīnat*).

Also, only in the human species do we find the messenger [of God] for whom it is possible to employ the spiritual world and extract benefits from it due to the [spiritual] aptitude inherent in him, give justice to everything, and produce admirable policies (*siyāsāt*) by which there is the perfection of the spiritual world and manifestation of its beauty.

(188) The [sign for the] beginning of *ta'yīd* in the *mu'ayyad* is that he becomes capable of discovering things (but not through the senses) which are the principles for deducing hidden meaning in the sensibles. Rather, [the *mu'ayyad*] finds himself existing amidst the sensibles, [but] detached from them, [and] craving for intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*) which have no connection with material things. The difference between a scholar (*ʿālim*) and *mu'ayyad* is, that the man of knowledge is always anxious to protect his sciences (*ʿulūm*), and his ruling (*ḥukm*) is on sensibles which are material in nature, whereas a *mu'ayyad* is independent of these [methods]. He [spontaneously] conceptualizes in his mind (*khāṭir*); whereas a scholar is incapable of doing that, and infers it through reasoning and by sensible proofs.

Sometimes something spiritual crosses their mind [i.e., *mu'ayyadūn*] which is not defined; so they interpret it by sensible expressions by which it is possible for the people to witness what they were interpreting for them. That concrete image of the sensible becomes strongly rooted in their mind. At times they see what they report to them is contrary [to their empirical knowledge], but they abandon their empirical knowledge (*ʿayān*) and accept their report. [Now] if the conjoining of *ta'yīd* was from the dimension of the senses, then their reports would not have such an eminence of surpassing sensible, empirical knowledge.

(189) It is said, 'The only [true] report is that which is concretely seen', but the conjoining of *ta'yīd* with them is not from the dimension of the senses. It [*ta'yīd*] is 'pure logos' (*nuṭq maḥḍ*), free from any linguistic forms and compositions, by means of which they are victorious (*qāḥir*) over the people who have access [to knowledge] by their senses, and they perceive it through language and linguistic compositions. At times the *mu'ayyad* receives *ta'yīd* by being attentive to a member of a species, for instance, an animal, or a tree or anything other than these two. By [his attention] the realities from the various [forms of] hidden knowledge are 'opened' (*fath*) to him and many secrets from the hidden [realities] dawn upon him. [When he reaches this station], the *ta'yīd* becomes firm in that form.

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1. Compare *Khawān al-ikhwān*, pp. 217–219.

(190) At times when a person speaks about something whose 'meanings' [or content] he does not know in the presence of the *mu'ayyad*, then *ta'yīd* of an astonishing category 'opens' for the *mu'ayyad* from the speech of that [person]. Whatever is 'opened' for him becomes the primary Divine Law (*nāmūs*), the implementation of which becomes obligatory for the people of the period of his cycle. So in this manner *ta'yīd* conjoins with the *mu'ayyad* in the physical world. All success is due to God.

### Spiritual Hermeneutics: Symbolism of the Cross

*Thirty-first Wellspring: The meaning of the Cross for the Community of Jesus,  
Peace be upon Him*

(143) Cross is a name for a piece of wood on which a man is crucified in such a manner that all the people [collected] can see him. The crucified is the dead body. Jesus, peace be upon him, reported to his Community that when the Lord of Resurrection (*Qā'im*), whose symbol was he himself, will unveil the realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) hidden in the forms of *Sharā'i'* the people will know them and they will not deny them.<sup>1</sup> Just as when all the people see a crucified person, they come to know him and notify his form although until then the majority may not have known him. Because of this [deeper] meaning his Day [i.e., the *Qā'im*'s] is called 'the Day of unveiling', as He said, 'On the Day when matters will be completely unveiled and they will be called to prostrate' [Qur'ān, 68:42]. So the crucified on the wood will be unveiled, although before that he was hidden under the veil.

(144) The other indication: He [Jesus] informed his Community that the Lord of Resurrection would facilitate his and his deputies' [task] in extracting the explication (*bayān*) of everything. So the religion will be without any assumption; there will be explication [of many levels of the religion], just as [various] limits (*hudūd*) are combined in this dead [piece] of wood.

(145) It is narrated in some reports that on the 'Night of Destiny' (*laylat al-qadr*), the light will radiate, and all the bodies, trees and fishes will prostrate to that light. That is a parable struck for the potency of the Resurrector, peace be upon him, and his deputies and their power over extracting explication from everything. They will be able to report about things in their intellects from the dimension of primordial nature (*fiṭrat*), discretion and deduction.

(146) The piece of wood on which [Jesus] was crucified was brought by other than his people who crucified him openly and manifestly. [This is a parable

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1. The notion of cycle refers to the concept of Ismaili sacred history of religion, which is divided into seven cycles, each cycle founded by a speaker-prophet, *nāṭiq*. The seven *nāṭiqs* are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and Qā'im (or Messiah). The first six are the revealers of the divine *Sharā'i'*; the last one would unveil the inner truths or realities of all the *Sharā'i'* revealed to the speaker-prophets. He will not reveal any new Law. Cf. H. Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, tr. R. Manheim and J. W. Morris (London, 1983), pp. 84–99.

implying that] the explication which the Resurrector and his deputies, peace be upon them, will unveil will be of the *Sharā'i* of the messengers who were anterior to him. So the [Cross] becomes a sign, a clear explication for all the limits [*ḥudūd*, of initiatic hierarchy of the Resurrector], and the veneration of it becomes a requisite thing for them [i.e., the Community of Jesus] as our veneration of the *Shahādah*.

*Thirty-second Wellspring: On the correspondence between the Cross  
and the Shahādah*

(147) The *Shahādah* is based on negation and affirmation. It begins with negation and ends with affirmation. Similarly, the Cross is [constituted] of two pieces of wood, one piece is firm [or stable] by itself, and the other has no firmness but is firm by the firmness of the other.

The *Shahādah* is composed of four words; similarly the Cross has four parts. One part is firm in the earth; its way station (*manzil*) is [homologous to] the way station of the 'master of *ta'wīl* (esoteric hermeneutic)' upon whom the souls of the aspirants are firmly established. The part opposite to it which is high up in the air, its way station is [homologous to] the way station of the 'master of *ta'yīd*' upon whom the *mu'ayyadūn* are firmly established. The other two parts which are in the middle, one on the right and one on the left, [are homologous] respectively to the *Tālī* (the Follower, i.e., Soul) and *Nāṭiq* (the speaker-prophet); one is the master of composition [of the natural structures, *tarkīb*], and the other is the master of the codification [of religious ordinances, *ta'līf*]. They face each other. [This] part is established on the Preceder [*Sābiq*, Intellect, the vertical part] which extends to all the letters.

(148) The *Shahādah* is composed of seven syllables. Similarly the Cross has four angles and three extremities. The four angles and three extremities indicate the seven Imams [lit. completers, *atimmā'*] of his [Jesus's] cycle as the seven syllables in the *Shahādah* indicate the Imams of the cycle of our *Nāṭiq* [Muḥammad], peace be upon him. Each one of [of the four parts of the Cross] has three dimensions, so the aggregate is twelve; similarly, the *Shahādah* is composed of twelve letters. Also its combination is from three letters not repeated: similarly the composition of the Cross is from the surfaces, lines and angles. The lines correspond to the letter *alif*, the surfaces to the letter *lām*, and the angles to the letter *hā'*. Just as the *Shahādah* is completed by its association with Muḥammad—peace be upon him and upon his progeny—similarly the Cross acquires eminence after the master of the cycle has brought it into existence.

## Abū Ḥātim Rāzī

Abū Ḥātim Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān Rāzī (d. 322/934) was the chief *dāʿī* (missionary) of Rayy and the leader of the *daʿwah* in the Jibāl. He greatly expanded Ismaili activities in Iran only to go into hiding in Ṭabaristān after the conquest of Rayy by the Sunni Sāmānids in 313/925. It was in Daylam that Abū Ḥātim succeeded in converting a number of rulers, among whom one can mention the governor of Rayy, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, Ashraf ibn Shīrawayh and Maḥdī ibn Khusraw Fīrūz.

His correspondence with other figures such as Abū Ṭāhir al-Jannābī who, like him, were expecting the appearance of the Maḥdī, is an indication of his affiliation to Qarmaṭī circles and his keen interest in the occultation of the Imam. In fact, it was his false prediction of the date of the Maḥdī's return that aroused the anger of his patron Mardāwīj, who may even have claimed to be the representative of the hidden Imam himself. Kirmānī recounts a famous debate between Abū Ḥātim Rāzī and Zakariyyā' Rāzī that took place in Mardāwīj's presence.

Along with a number of other early Ismaili thinkers such as Nasafī, Rāzī belonged to that Persian school of Ismailism which did not accept the Imamate of ʿAbd Allāh al-Maḥdī. These figures were deeply engaged in philosophical speculations offering rational defence for such concepts as the Imamate, prophecy, cosmology, and metaphysics. It was in this period and because of such figures as Rāzī that Neoplatonism entered systematically into Ismaili doctrine, in particular the concepts of the unknowable God, emanation and the hierarchical chain of being, leaving aside those aspects of Neoplatonism that were inconsistent with the Islamic credo. Rāzī discusses the central Neoplatonic propositions of Nasafī concerning creation in his *al-Iṣlāḥ*. Among the central ideas of Rāzī is an application of the concepts of emanation to the cosmological notions of *kun* and *qdr*, holding the view that the three letters of *qdr* issue from the three letters of the word *kun*, identifying the former with the soul and the latter with the Intellect. The human soul, Rāzī says, is a trace of the higher soul that is perfect, like the Intellect.

In this chapter we have included a portion of Rāzī's major work, *A'lām al-nubuwwah* ('Science of Prophecy'). The first section, entitled 'The Prophets are the Origin of Scientific Learning and Bequeathed It to the Sages', deals with the question of prophecy, the nature of a prophet's knowledge of the world and the nature of revelation. This treatise explores the subject of epistemology with emphasis on *a priori* knowledge as the basis upon which philosophical inquiries are made. In the second section, entitled 'The Origin of Astronomical Observation', Rāzī continues with the theme of revelation in the context of the philosophy of science, arguing that had it not been for divine guidance man could not have attained knowledge to the extent that he has. In the third section, 'The Origin of Known Drugs', Rāzī continues to argue that without the element of prophecy, revelation and divine providence, it would have been impossible for man to have acquired such a vast knowledge of drugs, both herbal and chemical. In the fourth section, 'All Knowledge Goes Back to the First Sage', Rāzī concludes his discussion with the idea that knowledge has been made possible by virtue of a 'gate' (meaning the Imam) through whom the gift of knowledge has been bestowed.

M. Aminrazavi



## SCIENCE OF PROPHECY

*A'lām al-nubuwwah*

Translated for this volume by Everett K. Rowson from Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, *A'lām al-nubuwwah*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Ṣāwī and Gh. R. A'wānī (Tehran, 1977), pp. 271–318.

## Chapter VII

**Section I: The Prophets are the Origin of Scientific  
Learning and Bequeathed It to the Sages**

Now that we have completed our discussion of the miracle of Muḥammad, that is, the glorious Qur'ān, and shown how there remains in the world an ongoing and paramount indicator of its miraculous quality, returning to this point repeatedly in order to clarify its various aspects and reveal its full force,<sup>1</sup> we now turn to our reply to another of the apostate's claims:

He has stated that the philosophers have acquired their knowledge by formulating their own opinions and discovered it by means of their own careful inquiries, relying therein on innate inspiration<sup>2</sup> resulting from the acuity of their natural faculties.<sup>3</sup> By this knowledge I am referring to the information found in medical books about the natures of drugs and their specific characteristics, the information in Ptolemy's *Almagest*<sup>4</sup> about the motions of the celestial sphere and the planets, the calculations about the stars and the various subtleties and astrological implications connected with this, the science of geometry and mensuration as found in Euclid, information about the latitudinal and longitudinal dimensions of the earth and the distances between the different heavens, and other such information contained in these books. Now the apostate claimed that all of this information was arrived at by independent discovery and innate

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1. In the previous chapter Abū Ḥātim has argued at length that the progressive success of the Islamic polity in the world, and Islam's role in producing and maintaining social order, is the most eloquent argument for the miraculous nature (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān, a dogma universally accepted but variously interpreted; see *ELz*, s. v. *i'djāz*.

2. *Ilhām*, 'inspiration', refers to an innate ability to learn or do something without outside instruction. It is used of animals for instinctive behaviour; for human beings, Abū Ḥātim opposes it throughout this chapter to *waḥy*, often also translated 'inspiration' but here rendered 'revelation', which is specific knowledge bestowed by God on an individual in one of several ways, all transcending natural processes.

3. Literally, 'their nature (*ṭab'*)'; *bi'l-ṭab'*, translated 'by nature' in the following discussion, refers to one's natural faculties, unaided by outside revelation.

4. Literally, 'the *Almagest* and Ptolemy'; Abū Ḥātim seems to be unclear on the relation between author and work, just as he refers regularly to Euclid's *Elements* simply as 'Euclid', as if this were a title.

inspiration, the philosophers having no need therein for our leaders,<sup>1</sup> that is, the prophets.

Then he went further, boasting that ‘the benefit and harm to be derived from these books are greater than the benefit and harm to be derived from the books of the adherents of religious traditions.’<sup>2</sup> In his pride, he said, ‘Tell us where your leaders have pointed out the difference between poisons and nutriments, and the effects of drugs! Show us a single page treating such a thing, comparable to the pages—not just a few, but thousands—which have been transmitted from Hippocrates and Galen, to the benefit of human beings! Show us any knowledge about the motions and causes of the celestial sphere which has been transmitted from any one of your leaders, or anything about the wonderful subtle natures of things, such as geometry or, for that matter, language,<sup>3</sup> which was unknown until your leaders came up with it!’

He went on, ‘If you say that the origin<sup>4</sup> of all this was taken from your leaders, we reply that your claim is invalid and cannot be granted you; for we know what it is that you are claiming comes from your leaders, and it is the silly foolishness which is bandied about among both common people and the elite.’<sup>5</sup>

He went on, ‘And if you ask from where comes people’s knowledge of the drug’s effects on bodies, and of the motion of the celestial sphere, and in what language people were summoned to invent languages,<sup>6</sup> we have things to say which require no resort to your leaders. Some of these things have been derived on the basis of standard principles<sup>7</sup> recognized by the appropriate experts, such as observation of the stars and knowledge of the effects of drugs on bodies and the knowledge of

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1. *A’immah*, plural of *imām*, a complex term with rich religious connotations, particularly in Shi’i Islam, used regularly by Abū Ḥātim for the founders and authority figures of both religious and intellectual traditions.

2. *Ahl al-sharā’i’*, literally, ‘the people of religious legal systems’, the *sharī’ah* of Islam being the totality of its legal and ethical tenets and essentially identified with the religion itself, and the other revealed religions, Judaism and Christianity, being here regarded from the same point of view.

3. *Min amr al-lughāt*, ‘the matter of languages’; the text seems questionable here, but the problem of the origin of language is in fact a third major topic, besides the origins of astronomy and medicine, treated in the following discussion.

4. *Aṣl*, ‘origin, root, foundation, first principle’ combining the ideas of temporal priority and fundamental basis, and necessarily translated variously in the following discussion.

5. The text here is uncertain; ‘silly foolishness’ is *al-ḍa’f al-raqī’*, reading *raqī’* for the MSS’ *waqīḥ* or *rā’* (?). Without wider context, it is unclear what Abū Bakr is referring to, although it may include the medical lore preserved in prophetic tradition and known as ‘prophetic medicine’ (*al-ṭibb al-nabawī*), and perhaps the pre-Islamic Arabian *anwā’*, a system correlating star risings and settings with meteorological phenomena.

6. Text uncertain: *bi-ayyi lughah tud’ā al-nās ilā ikhtirā’ al-lughāt*.

7. *Rusūm*, ‘traces, traditions, prescriptive pronouncements preserved as authoritative and recognized by later followers’, variously translated in what follows; Abū Ḥātim often uses this term as a near-synonym of *aṣl*.

how they inhere in foods and scents; others have been passed on from generation to generation ever since the beginning<sup>1</sup> of time; others again are known by nature, just as a goose knows how to swim without being taught by your leaders. Thus is the argument which you in advance refuted.

This is the apostate's statement, which we have reproduced just as he made it. And here is our reply:

As for his claim about the benefit and harm derived from such books, that they are superior therein to the glorious Qur'ān and the other revealed books, we have already given an explanation about that which suffices for anyone who judges fairly without obstinacy or self-deception.<sup>2</sup> 'As for him who rebels and chooses the life of this world, hell will be his home; but as for him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains his soul from lust, the Garden will be his home.'<sup>3</sup>

As for the books he mentions, saying that they come from the philosophers' leaders, we say that they in fact go back to<sup>4</sup> the veracious Sages who were supported<sup>5</sup> by God, and that the names of their leaders which now appear in them are simply pseudonyms. That is, the names which are cited as being the authors of these books, like Galen, Hippocrates, Euclid, Ptolemy, and the like, are aliases for the names of the Sages who originally composed them, and the books themselves are based on valid wisdom and organized first principles. I engaged in a debate with the apostate about things found in the Book of Balinās;<sup>6</sup> we had been told that the author of this book was a man of our own era, and of our own religious tradition, who adopted that name and composed that book, and we mentioned something of what he had to say and the examples he presented in his book. I brought this up to the apostate, and he said, 'That is true, and we already knew it; this man's name was So-and-so, he lived during the time of al-Ma'mūn, and he was a sage who philosophized'. We had

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1. *Nihāyah*, literally, 'end', but the reference here and in the discussion below is to tracing a chain back through time.

2. In the previous chapter, Abū Ḥātim has argued that the social and ethical norms laid down by the Qur'ān are absolutely essential to man's welfare, unlike the insights afforded by the sciences, which are known and pursued only by a few specialists, and which the vast majority of people both can and do live perfectly well without.

3. Qur'ān 79:37–41.

4. *Rusūm*.

5. Singular *mu'ayyad*; in Shi'i and especially Ismaili writing, this term implies some sort of revelation by God.

6. This is the work of natural philosophy and alchemy known as *Kitāb sirr al-khalīqah* or *Kitāb al-'ilal* and attributed to Balinās (pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana), the putative author of numerous other occult works in Arabic as well. See the introductions by U. Weisser to her edition (Aleppo, 1979) and translation, *Das 'Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung' von Pseudo-Apollonios von Tyana* (Berlin, 1980). Abū Ḥātim has already cited the introductory paragraphs of this work in chapter three, where he refutes Abū Bakr's claim that the religious traditions are full of contradictions by suggesting that apparently contradictory accounts must be understood symbolically or allegorically, and points to the same use of symbolism and allegory among the philosophers, including Proclus and Democritus (citing material from ps.-Ammonius), Plato, and Balinās.

also heard the same thing from others.<sup>1</sup> So this man followed the same path as those ancient sages, adopting a name of the same type as those names,<sup>2</sup> and speaking in the same way. But he spoke explicitly about the Unity of God, refuting the Dualists and other apostates, and asserted the createdness of the world, supporting this with many powerful arguments; he then spoke about how the world was generated and about the causes of things, employing many examples, some of which were simple and whose point could be grasped easily, while others were more abstruse. This is the same way those other sages, who adopted those names, proceeded.

I also read in the *Book of Daniel* that when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and took its people captive, he chose some young men from among those captives to serve him, one of them being Daniel. These men served him until he saw his vision and inquired of the magicians, enchanter, Magians, Chaldeans, astrologers, and seers about it, seeking its interpretation; they were unable to tell him what it was or interpret it, but Daniel did both. Nebuchadnezzar said to Daniel, 'No one in my entire kingdom was able to tell me my vision or interpret it, but you were able to do so, because the pure spirit of God is in you; your name shall be Belteshazzar'. Subsequently, he had another vision, and said 'Summon to me Daniel, the greatest of the sages, whom I have named Belteshazzar, after the name of my God'. Daniel was summoned to him, and interpreted his vision for him after telling him what it was. He said that 'Belteshazzar' means 'Image of B'al', B'al being the idol which they used to worship.<sup>3</sup>

The reason we mention all this is with reference to our statement that the names to which these books are attributed are aliases for the sages who composed them. These aliases have meanings which are known to those who know the relevant language. Those sages initially adopted those names as aliases for their own names. But then they were imitated by these erring liars, who looked into these transmitted works<sup>4</sup> and relied on them, without holding to what is transmitted from the founders of the religious traditions. They made the opinions of the former their base, and went deeply into them, and came up with these dreadful babblings which they claim as wisdom and philosophy, purporting to follow the ways of the sages. They spoke of the Creator—be He exalted and glorified—and of the principles of things, displaying utter confusion about them, and claimed that they had derived through their own cleverness and natural faculties what the sages who preceded them were unmindful of. Thus they came up with these babblings of which we have already given an account, and in which we have shown how they disagreed,

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1. For a discussion of the historicity of this claim, see Weisser, *Das 'Buch über das Geheimnis der Schöpfung'*, p. 54.

2. That is, as becomes clear below, a name ending in 's'; Galen, Ptolemy, and Euclid appear in Arabic as Jālinūs, Batlamīyūs, and Iqlīdus.

3. See Daniel 1–4, especially 4:9. The true etymology of 'Belteshazzar' is obscure.

4. *Rusūm*.

illustrating their controversies, confusions, and contradictions, and their headlong pursuit of these erroneous paths.<sup>1</sup> In just this way the apostate claimed that he had attained through his own cleverness what those who preceded him were not clever enough to realize, coming up with his own silly doctrine and claiming to be the equal of Hippocrates in medicine and of Socrates in deriving subtleties. For this is the same way followed by those liars who preceded him, imitating the philosophers and adopting their names, choosing apostasy as their religion<sup>2</sup> and tradition,<sup>3</sup> and holding to a doctrine which strips God of all His essential qualities.<sup>4</sup> I personally have met someone who followed this path and adopted the name Naṣṭūlus, and another who called himself Naṣṭūs.

Such was the way followed by these liars. But as for the true ancient sages who composed these valid works<sup>5</sup> on astronomy, medicine, geometry, and other natural sciences, they were the sages among the people of their eras, the leaders of their ages, and God's proofs to His creatures in their times, whom God supported with revelation<sup>6</sup> coming from Him and whom He taught this wisdom. Thus each of them contributed a particular kind of wisdom. One contributed the science of medicine, while others contributed other mathematical and natural sciences. They presented them to the people, who took them from them, since God wanted to make His creatures aware of the wisdom in these principles,<sup>7</sup> to manifest the ranks of these prophets in their times, and to display God's proofs to His creatures by means of their tongues. So, for example, it has been handed down that the principles of astronomy come from the prophet Idrīs. Some people have interpreted God's words in the story of Idrīs that 'We raised him to a high place'<sup>8</sup> as meaning that God raised him up to the mountain which is at the navel of the world, and sent him an angel to teach him the things connected with the celestial sphere, its terms<sup>9</sup> and zodiacal

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1. In chapter IV of this work Abū Ḥātim reproduces a doxography of Greek philosophers, both pre- and post-Socratic, illustrating their contradictions on various topics. This doxography, which bears little relationship to reality and betrays considerable Neoplatonic influence throughout, is very closely related to a work attributed in manuscript to 'Ammonius'; see U. Rudolph, ed., *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios: Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam* (Stuttgart, 1989).

2. *Sharī'ah*.

3. *Rasm*.

4. *Ta'ṭīl*, 'stripping' God of his attributes, an accusation commonly hurled at the Mu'tazilites, as well as the Neoplatonic philosophers, and virtually equivalent in the eyes of religious conservatives to atheism.

5. *Rusūm*.

6. *Waḥy*.

7. *Usūl*.

8. Qur'ān 19:57.

9. *Ḥudūd*, Greek *horia*, sections of the zodiacal signs assigned to individual planets; see al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trans. R. R. Wright (London, 1934), section 453; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trans. W. G. Waddell and F. E. Robbins (Cambridge, MA, 1940), section I.20–21.

signs, the planets and the periods of their orbits, and other aspects of the science of astronomy.

Furthermore, they say that the Hermes mentioned by the philosophers is Idrīs, his name among the philosophers being Hermes but in the Qur'ān Idrīs—both these names resemble those names like Galenos, Aristoteles, and so forth, which end in 's'—and in the other revealed books Enoch.<sup>1</sup> This, then, is an indication that such men used to have these names as aliases. The same pattern can be seen, among the names of prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān, in Elias as well as Idrīs. Among those prophets and sages mentioned by the People of the Book there are Simon, the disciple of the Messiah, who was called Petros; his brother, one of the twelve, whose name was Andreios; among the twelve apostles, Philippos; Marcos, one of the four; and Malghūs, the apostle who was obeyed among them.<sup>2</sup> Among the prophets they mention are Sarāqsīs, Agabos, Lucios, Paulus, and Philadelphius.<sup>3</sup> So there are many such names among the prophets and sages, which resemble the names of the ancient philosophers who composed the books of medicine, astronomy, and geometry, using such names as aliases—as we mentioned with regard to Idrīs, saying that he was the first to teach people the science of astronomy, and that he is the same as Hermes, being known among the philosophers by that name.

If someone should ask, 'Why, then, did Muḥammad prohibit investigation into astronomy, if it is one of the sciences of the prophets?' We reply: Because this is abrogated, in the same way as the rest of the prophets' works are abrogated and prohibited.<sup>4</sup> God has ordered people not to occupy themselves with such things at the expense of investigation into the religious ordinances<sup>5</sup> of Islam, while not forbidding these things categorically.<sup>6</sup> His prohibition is meant to discourage such investigation, because if a man goes into such things too deeply, without focusing careful attention on the

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1. On the identification of the Qur'ānic Idrīs with both the Biblical Enoch (whose 'ascension' comes ultimately from Genesis 5:24 and is described in several Jewish apocalypses) and the Greek Hermes, see *EL2*, s. vv. Hirmis, Idrīs. Numerous sources report that Hermes ascended to Saturn and was thus able to observe the motions of the celestial spheres; see E. K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate: al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-amad 'ala'l-abad* (New Haven, CT, 1988), p. 241f. I have not, however, seen the more terrestrial variant of this ascent offered here. The 'navel of the earth' is apparently equivalent to what is usually termed the 'dome of the earth', i.e., its assumed 'centre', at the intersection of the equator and the prime meridian. It was usually placed at, or on the meridian of, the Indian city of Ujjayn, but sometimes on Ceylon or elsewhere; see *EL2*, s. v. al-Ḳubba.

2. I do not know who is being referred to here.

3. Agabos (MSS Āghā-yūnus) is mentioned at Acts 11:27f, 21:10, and Lucios at Acts 13:1. I have not been able to identify the other names, possibly garbled in the MSS.

4. 'Abrogation', *naskh*, is a Qur'ānic term, referring there to the supersession of the earlier Jewish and Christian revealed books by the Qur'ān, but was much elaborated and more widely applied in later Islamic legal theory.

5. *Sharā'i'*.

6. Abū Ḥātim distinguishes between qualified prohibition (*nahy*) and categorical forbidding (*tahrim*).

religious ordinances, the Unity of God, and the subtleties of the true (religious) sciences, he will become confused and led to apostasy, ending up in the same position as those errant ones who call themselves philosophers; thus he prohibited going deeply into such things. Another reason is that someone who investigates these things takes on a task which he cannot carry out properly, tells untruths, acts like a soothsayer,<sup>1</sup> makes extravagant statements, and multiplies false claims about the judgments of the stars; as has been transmitted from the Prophet's statement, 'Beware of investigating astronomy, for it leads to soothsaying,' thus discouraging Muslims from telling untruths, making false claims, and falling into the intellectual confusion feared for them if they do not look carefully into their religion.<sup>2</sup> This, then, is the reason for the prohibition of astronomy and the investigation of it. He did not simply forbid it, for if he had, it would not be permissible for any Muslim to investigate it at all, and astronomy would be treated like the other forbidden things, such as wine, carrion, blood, and pork. In short, the origin of the science of astronomy is from Idris; Hermes is Idrīs; he was a prophet, and a member of our community, not the community of the apostates; there were five generations between him and Adam.

As for knowledge of the natures<sup>3</sup> of things, when God created Adam with a body composed of the natures which come from the earth, and provided him with nourishment produced by the earth, the various natures being in some cases opposed and in others similar, some harmful and some beneficial, 'He taught Adam all the names.'<sup>4</sup> For Adam's body and the bodies of his offspring could only be maintained with nourishment, but some nourishment is harmful and some beneficial; and since their bodies were subject to disease, and every disease must have some remedy, He taught him which things generate diseases, and what the proper remedy is for every disease. For he could not do without that, and God's Mercy would not permit him and his offspring to fall ill without knowing of remedies for their diseases. So it was that God taught Adam about all these natures, and Adam then passed this knowledge on to his offspring, some of whom retained it and some of whom forgot it, and so it was passed down from generation to generation. Thus God has said in the glorious Qur'ān, 'And he taught Adam all the names,' and thus He taught him all that he needed for his religion and for the life of this world. Nothing other than this was possible, in God's wisdom, since mankind could not do without the worship of God, and knowledge of Him, for a single moment, and it was not possible for them to live in this world a single day without knowing what was good and bad, harmful and beneficial, for their bodies.

1. Kāhin, a pre-Islamic Arabian oracular figure, suppressed by Islam; see *EL*2, s. v.

2. The only *ḥadīth* resembling this recorded in Wensinck's concordance of the standard collections is in Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1313), vol. 1, p. 78, where a series of prohibitions includes '*wa lā tujālis aṣḥāb al-nujūm*', 'do not sit with the astrologers'.

3. *Tabā'ī'*, referring to the properties of physical, particularly organic, substances, and often, as here, connoting pharmacological and medical knowledge.

4. Qur'ān 2:31.

This is the 'beginning' for the knowledge of the natures of things which the apostate mentioned, saying 'from generation to generation since the beginning of time'. Here he spoke truly; but the 'beginning' is not what he maintained—that is, the beginning is not reached with Hippocrates and Galen, from whom he says 'not just a few, but thousands' of pages have been transmitted on medicine and the knowledge of drugs. What about the peoples before Hippocrates and Galen? Were they in no need of the knowledge of drugs? Certainly those who preceded them shared the same natures as those who came after them, right down to today. But if there were those before Hippocrates and Galen who knew of the natures of drugs, then these two must have taken their knowledge from those who preceded them, and the process ends up back at the beginning of creation, namely, Adam. It is he who is the 'beginning'. And if Hippocrates and Galen were able to add something to this knowledge, then the way they did so was as we have said, namely, that they were able to do so with support and revelation from God. But he who follows this way is in fact a prophet supported by God; and the prophets are *our* leaders, not the leaders of the apostates. And it cannot be denied that God does reveal to prophets things which people need but have forgotten, and in that way renews the teaching for them. For example, they say that the Messiah would not pass by a stone or a tree without its speaking to him.<sup>1</sup> 'Speaking' here does not mean 'addressing' in the conventional sense, but rather 'serving as an indication and object of consideration'. For when someone considers something and becomes aware of its potential benefit and harm, that thing has 'spoken' to him; this is something well known among people of knowledge and discrimination. So it was with the Messiah: he would not pass by something without becoming aware of its nature, by means of revelation from God. And this was also the way of the sages who composed those works; they were unable to do so except by means of revelation and support from God, and thus they were prophets. No one can become aware of the nature of a thing by means of his own intellect and cleverness; that is simply not valid for intellects.

The apostate was offering an absurdity when he claimed that such knowledge has been attained by deduction, inspiration, inquiry, experimentation with taste and odours, and the other things that he mentioned, and when he claimed that these sages were inspired with this by their own natural faculties, without instruction, and that God made them free of any need for our leaders, just as He inspired the goose to swim by nature and made it free of any need for our leaders. I say, Glory to God! As I marvel at the apostate. How was he led to this argument, which befits the blindness of his heart and deficiency of his intellect, when he claimed that the sages were inspired to derive these subtleties without support from God and instruction from the leaders, but rather by their natural faculties, just as the goose swims by its nature, and that they were not in need of our leaders, just as the

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1. I have not found parallels to this statement.



goose is not in need of our leaders? Does the fool not realize that, even if it were as he claims—that is, that the sages derived these things by nature—this would not necessitate that this inspiration and nature be comparable to the inspiration and nature of the goose? For the goose is naturally created able to swim, having no need in that for reflection or discovery, just as all animals are naturally created able to do something—birds naturally fly in the air, aquatic animals swim in the water—and no species is able to go against what it has been naturally created for, because it does that by compulsion, not choice. Some animals both fly and swim, such as geese; some swim but do not fly, such as fish; others fly but do not swim, such as pigeons. Geese are naturally created to swim and fly, both young and old are naturally created to do that. One sees that goslings swim as soon as they hatch from their eggs, and among all geese there is not a single one which goes against this nature. So it is with all animals; there is not a species of which any single member goes against what it is naturally created for, precisely because it was naturally created for that.

But the rule for human beings with regard to deriving and discovering knowledge is not like that. For out of a thousand men or more, only one will be able to derive these subtleties, even if we grant the validity of the apostate's claim about nature and inspiration. Those who have expert knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and medicine are very few in number amidst the large total number of human beings. But if their deriving these subtleties by nature were comparable to the goose's swimming by nature, then all people would necessarily be arithmeticians, geometers, astronomers, and physicians, and the experts in geometry, the physicians, and the astronomers could not possibly be exceptional in their knowledge compared to the rest of people. For all geese swim, whether young or old. Furthermore, one would have to deny any role to instruction in their knowledge, just as one denies any role to instruction in the swimming of geese. Then, indeed, they would be in no need of our leaders, just as geese have no need of our leaders.

But suppose someone were to claim that if all people turned their attention to these matters, they would all be geometers, arithmeticians, astronomers, and physicians, just as the apostate argued when he claimed that if people turned their attention to learning and inquiring into philosophy they would attain what the philosophers have attained.<sup>1</sup> In reply, we ask: Have you ever seen a philosopher who inquired into philosophy by nature, before learning the first principles of philosophy and looking into the procedural rules of the philosophers, and before beginning by being instructed in these first principles, and only then inquiring and drawing analogies, after being instructed? If this person says yes, he is simply

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1. In his account of his debate with Abū Bakr in the first chapter of his book, Abū Ḥātim has Abū Bakr argue that a God Who was truly wise would not single out certain individuals as prophets, but would inspire (*alhamā*) all people with knowledge of what would benefit and harm them; asked whether God in His wisdom has actually done so, he replies that all people are in fact potentially philosophers, but most fail to turn their attention to what is most important.

trying to get the better of us by flagrantly lying. If he says no, then instruction is the first step, only after which comes inquiry and analogizing. But the goose is in no need of instruction, even at the beginning; he needs neither someone to make him swim nor some one to teach him how to swim; rather, all geese, young and old, swim by nature, as we have said. But man absolutely requires instruction at the beginning; if he does not receive instruction at the beginning, he achieves nothing by his nature. This is not in his capacity; he is not naturally created for it, nor compelled to it. Therefore he must necessarily have recourse to a leader to teach him; without one, his nature will be of absolutely no benefit to him or free him of any need, as the goose is free of the need for instruction from our leaders and of having recourse to them.

By his nature man only does things which his nature cannot go against, such as his sensory acts—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching—for these he is compelled to do. If he looks at something, he sees it; if the sound of something reaches his ears, he hears it; and if an odour enters his nostrils he smells it—assuming his senses are in sound order. He is also naturally created to walk on his two legs, and to grasp things with his two hands. All people are naturally created to do these things, just as geese are naturally created to swim, and they are equal in them, just as all geese are equal in swimming. It is *this* nature in people which resembles the goose's nature in swimming.

Every species of animals is naturally created to do its own act, and does not go against what it is naturally created to do. Man, however, is both naturally created for things, and given choice in things; he shares the former with animals, but is distinguished by the latter. Among the things in which he is given choice is learning the sciences, in which there are both specialists and laymen, and some who are incapable of learning even a single letter. So there must necessarily be among them both leader and led, both knowledgeable and ignorant. This is something that is obvious to even the common people, so how could the people of knowledge and discrimination not be aware of it? Have you ever seen someone blinder in his heart and more deficient in his intellect than the one who would compare the swimming of geese by nature to the deriving of the science of philosophy and knowledge of the motions of the celestial sphere, the natures of drugs, and other subtle sciences such as geometry and so forth? And have you ever seen anyone more ignorant than one who would claim that people have derived these subtleties, without need for our leaders, just as geese have no need for our leaders when they swim, and then go on to claim that he is the greatest philosopher in the world in his own time and the greatest sage among the people of his era? By my life! This claim, with this analogy and this comparison, is not far-fetched enough for him; he then goes on to defame the Muslims, saying, 'I grant that they labour under the affliction of befogged intellects and overpowering passions'. What befogging of intellect and overpowering of passion, I ask, could be more severe than the befogging of the

intellect and overpowering of passion in someone who draws an analogy like this? We say: We grant that, in this analogy and this philosophy of his, God has blinded his heart and befogged his intellect!

Then he asks us to tell him by what language the first of our leaders became familiar with languages, and whether this does not necessarily require inspiration,<sup>1</sup> claiming further that if a leader knew a language and then wished to teach it to people he would be unable to do so unless they already possessed it, so that one must absolutely appeal in the end to inspiration. Thus is the claim of the apostate.

We reply: Let the apostate maintain either the eternity of the world or its beginning in time. If he claims that it is eternal, this puts an end to our argument with him about languages, since they will be coeternal with the world, granting the claim of those who do maintain the eternity of the world, and there is nothing more to be said about inspiration or learning. If, on the other hand, he concedes the beginning of the world in time,<sup>2</sup> we would say that He who originated the world, when He created this humankind, taught him languages, as we do in fact say that He—be He honoured and glorified—‘taught Adam all the names’. It may be that God taught Adam all the languages, and that he in turn taught them to his children; or it may be that God taught him only some of them, and that He—be He honoured and glorified—then taught the rest of them to those of Adam’s progeny who were in a similar position of prophethood. Thus it has been said that Adam knew the Syriac language,<sup>3</sup> and that once he began to have offspring, his progeny learned his language in the same way as we see children following their fathers in their languages in all climes and islands; so also then would it be that for each prophet, when God had taught him a language, his community followed his model and learned his language.

For instance, we can observe directly that in former times only a very small number among the Persians were acquainted with the language of the Arabs, but once they received the religion of Islam they undertook to learn Arabic, to the point that most of them have achieved proficiency in it—but by learning, not by inspiration. Have you ever seen a Persian who was inspired with the language of the Arabs without having to learn it, in accordance with the apostate’s claim that ‘if a

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1. Apparently Abū Bakr is arguing that a language cannot be externally taught without prior knowledge of another language, so that some sort of internal inspiration is necessary to explain the beginning of the process; but the argument is not entirely clear. ‘Became familiar with’ is *waqafa ‘alā*; the causative form of this verb, *waqqafa*, with its verbal noun *tawqīf* (translated below as ‘instilling’) is the standard term employed by those, such as Abū Ḥātim, who see the origin of language in a revelatory act by God to a single individual.

2. As Abū Bakr in fact did, maintaining that the world itself, unlike the five eternal entities (Creator, Soul, Space, Time, and Matter), was created by the Creator after the failure of the Soul’s attempt to create on its own. His view is summarized by Abū Ḥātim in the first chapter of this work.

3. This view, which was ultimately Rabbinic, was predominant among Muslim scholars, although a minority held that Adam spoke Arabic; see *EI2*, s. v. Adam.

leader wished to teach a language to people he would be unable to do so unless they already possessed it, so that one must absolutely appeal in the end to inspiration? The Persians have learned Arabic, without already possessing it, but they have not acquired the ability to speak it by inspiration, but by learning.<sup>1</sup>

So in general the way one learns a language one is unaccustomed to is in fact to acquire it by learning, not by inspiration. And for every language there must necessarily be a leader to whom God taught it, and who then taught it to people. It is said, for instance, that the first to speak Arabic was Ishmael son of Abraham, whose tongue God loosed for it and to whom He taught it, because he was a prophet;<sup>2</sup> then Ishmael taught it to his progeny, who acquired it from him by learning, not inspiration, in the same way as one can observe directly how the Persians have acquired it from the Arabs, by learning, not by inspiration. This is quite clear and indubitable. But if the argument is clear by direct observation in the case of this language, then that is an indicator that the same holds for the other languages and that each of them began with a single man, to whom God taught a given language, which he in turn taught to those who followed his model. And if it is clear that the secondary case is one of learning, not inspiration, then it is a valid conclusion that the original case is also one of learning, not inspiration. And if it is valid that that original case is from a single man who learned the language, and we find no one else prior to him, then it is valid to conclude that that first man learned it from the Creator of languages, just as that first man was himself created by the Creator of languages and Creator of the entire creation, and that God taught him by means of revelation. If that is inspiration, then it is from God—be He honoured and glorified—and is a sort of revelation.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the apostate must necessarily fall back on what the adherents of the religious traditions say, namely, that the beginning of the learning of all things comes from God—glorified be His name—by His granting revelation to His prophets, who have then taught them to people. Thus it is said that Babylon was called Babylon on

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1. In his *Kitāb al-zīnah*, vol. 1, p. 64, Abū Ḥātim mentions that he is a native speaker of Persian; this remark occurs in the course of a disquisition on the superiority of Arabic to other languages, illustrated by the deficiencies of Persian.

2. Abū Ḥātim repeats this assertion in his *Kitāb al-zīnah*, pp. 141–146, where a number of different views by earlier scholars are cited.

3. Abū Ḥātim's view of the origin of language, summed up in the term *tawqīf*, 'instilling (by God)', seems to have been the dominant one among Muslims up to his time, and was represented by, among others, al-Ash'arī (who also, however, uses the term *ilhām*). In Abū Ḥātim's lifetime it was challenged by the Mu'tazilite Abū Hāshim, who argued for a purely conventional origin for language (*iṣṭilāh*), the members of a society agreeing to assign a given vocable to a given entity. (It is not clear whether this latter theory is compatible with Abū Bakr's view.) On this entire question, see B. G. Weiss, 'Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 124 (1974), pp. 33–41; Abū Ḥātim's views on language, as expounded in the *Kitāb al-zīnah*, are discussed by G. Vajda, 'Les lettres et les sons de la langue arabe d'après Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzi', *Arabica*, 8 (1961), pp. 113–130.

account of the babble of tongues that arose (*tabalbalat*) in it after Noah emerged from the ark; for the children of Noah and those who were with him in the ark dispersed into different lands, each of them speaking a different language, so that their progeny acquired their languages from them, the original one in each land having been taught his language by God. If this was a case of ‘inspiration’, then it is in fact revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and learning from Him; if, on the other hand, each first speaker learned from an angel, that is still revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and learning from Him, for the prophets have occupied various ranks, God favouring some to various degrees over others. To some the angel came with revelation and appeared before them so that they saw him with their eyes. Others saw the angels only with their spirit. Thus Gabriel used sometimes to come to Muḥammad in the form of a man, while at other times he would go into a trance when revelation came to him and then regain consciousness and recite what God had revealed. Others have something cast into their hearts, that being inspiration and support from God—be He honoured and glorified—and revelation from Him. Others receive revelation in dreams. Others look at something and take a lesson from it, God casting this into their spirits and teaching them the benefits and harms inherent in that thing, as we have mentioned in the story of Jesus, saying that he used not to pass by a stone or a tree without its speaking to him. The revelation by God—be He honoured and glorified—to His prophets occurs in all these ways—He grants them revelation however He pleases, in accordance with their degrees.

Now if someone should object, saying, ‘People are inspired with various things, and see various things in dreams’, we reply: There are three sorts of inspiration. First, there is that which is revealed by God—be He honoured and glorified; in this case, that which is uttered by him whom God inspires turns out to be valid, and the truth and wisdom in what he says becomes apparent in what he utters from that inspiration; and if it is valid, then we know that it is from God. For instance, God—be he honoured and glorified—has mentioned: ‘And we revealed to the mother of Moses, (saying,) ‘Suckle him! But if you fear for him, then cast him into the river’ and then said ‘We shall bring him back to you and make him one of Our messengers’;<sup>1</sup> this turned out to be valid, since God did indeed bring Moses back to her and made him one of the messengers. Second, there is that which is instilling by God—be He honoured and glorified—in those who act rightly among His servants, in that which they undertake or leave alone among matters both secular and religious. And third, there is inspiration which comes from the babblings of the soul, like the speech of those babblers in which there is neither order nor truth; this comes from nature, lightness of the brain, and the seductions of Satan. So much for inspiration!

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1. Qur’ān 28:7.

Similarly, visions are of various sorts. That which the prophets see in their dreams can never in any way be invalid, nor does it require elucidation;<sup>1</sup> if they see something, that very thing occurs. This sort of vision is particular to them. But they also share another sort of vision with other people; for sometimes they see something in their dreams which does require interpretation, and in this case their dreams are just like the dreams other people see, which contain truth once they are elucidated. This is a sort of vision which prophets share with other people in having, while being singled out for the other kind which we mentioned first. Other kinds of vision are those that come from nature and from residual thoughts. These two kinds contain no truth, and the prophets are free of this sort of vision; they are what are called 'confused dreams'<sup>2</sup> and have no interpretation and cannot be validly elucidated. This is in contrast to the validity of the elucidation of valid visions which are of the secrets of the upper world and are seen by the right-acting person; these are of the same sort as the visions seen by the prophets, and are thus valid when interpreted, although they are not as lucid as the latter; as the Prophet said, 'A good vision from a good man is one-fortieth of prophecy'.<sup>3</sup>

Such, then, is the nature of visions which are revelations to prophets, they being as we have described them, not requiring any elucidation or interpretation, and seen only by the prophets to the exclusion of other people. Such also are the ranks and degrees of the prophets; of all of these ranks Muḥammad was granted an abundant share, and God favoured him over those who were not of his degree in that. And the inspiration which is revelation from God is as we have stated.

Now the inspiration of him who is inspired with languages is revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and instilling and learning; it is thus prophecy. This is not the same as that inspiration which is the babblings of the apostates, who claim that it is general among people, in accordance with whatever speech they come forth with; rather, it is reserved for the prophets alone, to the exclusion of other people. And of languages, some are superior to others, just as among the prophets some are of a higher degree than others. The best of languages are four: Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Persian; for God—be He honoured and glorified—sent down His books to His prophets in these languages. Then the books were translated into the other languages for various communities, except for the glorious Qur'ān; for the Qur'ān is in the Arabic language, which is the best of the four, and it is unamenable to translation for reasons which it would take too long to go into here in this book but which we have explained elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

1. *Ibārah*, usually translated 'interpretation'; the present translation distinguishes it from *ta'wīl*, (exegetical) 'interpretation'.

2. *Aḍghāth ahlām*; the phrase comes from Qur'ān 12:44, 21:5.

3. This *ḥadīth* is widely reproduced, with numerous variations, particularly in the fraction cited; see, for instance, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo, 1930), vol. 15, p. 20f; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1313), vol. 1, p. 315, vol. 2, p. 219, etc.

4. This probably refers to the fuller discussion in the author's *Kitāb al-zīnah*, vol. 1, p. 61f.

Thus the origin of all languages, according to what we have said, is instilling from God—be He honoured and glorified—in His prophets, who then taught them to the people. It is not the case, as stated by the apostate, that they were derived by people with no revelation from God, and that it is possible for all people to be inspired with that. If such were the case, no language would be coherent, but would be subject to so much variation as to have no structure; for anything which is derived from differing people and on which views diverge will itself be inconsistent and incoherent—just like the inconsistency we have mentioned in the tenets of those so-called philosophers who contradict one another. But since we find every language to be coherent and agreed upon by a community of people, we know that the origin of every language must be from a single man supported by revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and thus it is valid to conclude that all languages come from the prophets.

Again, if the case were as claimed by the apostate, the people of every age would necessarily be inspired by some language which they initiated and which they speak;<sup>1</sup> but then how is it that this inspiration has now been cut off, this aptitude submerged, and this nature not continued, so that no one can mention any group who have invented a language that people have acquired from them and perpetuated over a long period without cessation except for what is reported about the languages mentioned above? If this were a general phenomenon, our opponents would necessarily be able to mention to us some originated language; but they will never come up with such a thing, since the origin of languages is in fact from the prophets, as we have said.

Therefore, once prophecy was sealed, so were languages—as were all other things connected in their origins with the prophets and sages, by revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and there remain in the world only what has been instituted<sup>2</sup> by them. Thus we do not find in the world anything other than their institutions or what has been derived from their institutions and built on their foundations. Among such originated institutions which belong to the category of the wisdom of the sages, we may point to what has been originated in our own community and derived from the Arabic language, namely grammar and prosody, which are gauges for the correctness of the speech of the Arabs. The foundations of these two sciences were acquired from the sages of the community and the leaders of right guidance. For grammar was instituted by the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī for Abū’l-Aswad al-Du‘alī,<sup>3</sup> and the Commander of the Faithful was the sage of his age, or rather the chief of the sages after the messenger of God in this community. God—be He honoured and glorified—inspired him with the derivation of

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1. Reading *yatakallamūn* for the text's *yastakmilūn*.

2. *Rusūm*.

3. On this famous students of ‘Alī see *EI2*, s. v. His legendary role as the founder of Arabic grammar, at the instigation of ‘Alī, is widely reproduced in the sources.

that. 'Alī was not a prophet, but rather one granted sagacity and divinely addressed;<sup>1</sup> but those granted sagacity and divinely addressed in this community correspond to the prophets in other communities, and their wisdom is derived from Muḥammad. 'Alī was singled out for this grace among the members of the community, and the Prophet consigned to him secrets with which he favoured him over others. Then 'Alī taught these secrets to those in the community who were worthy; some of them he restricted to certain members of the elite, concealing them from the masses, while others he bestowed freely upon both elite and masses.<sup>2</sup> Now grammar belongs to the category of the wisdom of the sages, although it is not directly connected with religion. 'Alī derived it from the language of the Arabs and passed it on to Abu'l-Aswad al-Du'ālī, who acquired it from him and then analogized from it; then other people acquired it in turn from him, and expanded the process of analogizing in it. Similarly, the foundation of prosody was taken by al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad<sup>3</sup> from one of the companions of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,<sup>4</sup> who was also the sage of his age and the Imam of his time. Then al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad analogized from it and made it available to the people. Thus these two foundations were originated in this community, both coming from the sages of the religion and the leaders of right guidance.

It is the same with every sort of wisdom in the world, whether of minor or major importance: in each case its origin goes back to the prophets, who bequeathed it to the sages and the learned after them, and it subsequently became the object of instruction among the people. And the situation with languages is the same. For if the matter were as claimed by the apostate, that is, that people were equal in wisdom, all people being inspired with it and acquiring it by nature rather than by revelation from God—be He honoured and glorified—and instruction, and that languages also functioned in this way, then none of them would have a coherent foundation or a proper structure, contrary to the coherence and structure that we actually observe in languages. The same applies to every book composed in the fields of wisdom, such as the *Almagest*, or Euclid, or other similar works. For, these have coherence and structure which indicates that in each case the foundation goes back to a single man, no one else sharing with him in its composition. But if this is established, one may validly conclude that it is a result of instilling by God—be

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1. *Murawwa' muḥaddath*, Shi'i terms distinguishing the mode of supernatural cognition granted the Imams from the direct Qur'ānic revelation to the Prophet.

2. Abū Ḥātim alludes obliquely to Ismaili imamology, distinguishing the esoteric knowledge of the Imams ('the elite') from the secular wisdom he also traces back to them.

3. Died ca. 170/786, the founder of Arabic lexicography as well as prosody. See *EI2*, s. vv. al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, 'Arūḍ.

4. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the third Imam of the Ismailis (and fourth Imam of the Twelvers), died 94–95/712–13. In contrast to the connection commonly made between Abu'l-Aswad and 'Alī in founding Arabic grammar, I know of no other sources linking al-Khalīl's work on prosody with a companion of Zayn al-'Ābidīn.



He honoured and glorified—and revelation from Him, rather than of derivation by nature. For it is not possible for a single man to be singled out from among all people who have arisen over many ages, and for that one man to be uniquely accorded such a capacity, when he has the same nature as the rest of them, unless there is in him some divine power granted him by the Creator of all creation—be He glorified and exalted. This power is the revelation which earns its receiver the title of prophet, in accordance with what we have explained about the ranks of prophets. This will not remain hidden to anyone who considers what we have said and regards it with an unbiased eye. God does not keep distant anyone except those who are obstinate and do injustice to themselves.

## **Section II: The Origin of Astronomy and Astronomical Observation**

The apostate has asked: ‘Where have your leaders pointed out the difference between poisons and nutriments, and the effect of drugs? Show us a single page treating such a thing, comparable to the pages—not just a few, but thousands—which have been transmitted from Hippocrates and Galen, to the benefit of human beings! Show us any knowledge about the motions and causes of the celestial sphere which has been transmitted from any one of your leaders, or anything about the wonderful subtle natures of things, such as geometry and other things.’ He has gone on to say: ‘And if you ask from whence comes people’s knowledge of the effects of drugs on bodies ...’, and made claims in this matter which we have already reproduced in his own words. We have now treated the subject of how the goose is inspired to swim, and the subject of languages, in a convincing manner, God willing; and we have stated our views on the sages who used aliases in place of their names and who laid these foundations, maintaining that they were prophets and in fact our leaders.

Those sages are not, then, to be counted among the leaders of the apostates who studied those books and foundations after them, calling themselves by their names, but rejected the religious ordinances and spoke about the Creator—be He glorified and exalted—and the first principles of things with that self-contradictory twaddle which they have made up and which shows their confusion and testifies to their error. The apostate thus has no right to glory in those veracious sages who founded these sciences, for they are our leaders, not the leaders of the apostates. By glorying in them and boasting himself of these foundations the apostate is like nothing so much as the shaykh who stood at the finish line of a race course when the horses had been set to race and one of them had come in first. When the shaykh saw that horse he could not contain his delight and began to clap his hands, jump about, and go into ecstasies; but when someone asked him whether the horse was his, he replied, ‘No, but his bridle is!’ Such is the apostate’s boasting of those sages and their foundations. And his relation to them is no different than

that of the carpenter's neighbour in the well-known proverb,<sup>1</sup> for the apostate denies prophecy, while these sages were prophets, as we have stated regarding Idrīs and others. The apostate has looked at their foundations and learned from them, while being ignorant of their merit and their ranks, demoting them from those ranks with which God favoured them to the base level which he has chosen for himself, in his ignorance and error.

Yet were he to consider their situation justly, he would realize that it is beyond human capacity even to determine the exact distance between two cities which are relatively close together, being separated by less than a hundred miles, without first surveying it with carefully measured, straightened, and calibrated cords and rods, and observing and performing the surveying operation himself; for were two or three men to survey it, they would inevitably produce different results. How, then, can one possibly claim that someone is able to determine the distances between the celestial spheres, which are far beyond the grasp of human imagination? Is it by direct observation? And how could they possibly make positive determinations of their magnitudes and then record these in their books, as they in fact have transmitted to us, saying that the latitude (?) of the sphere is 100,000 *farsakhs*<sup>2</sup> and that the distance between the nearest sphere and the surface (?) of the earth is 100,900 *farsakhs*?<sup>3</sup> And they go on in the same way to mention the distances between every pair of spheres, giving figures which we omit for the sake of brevity.

Furthermore, they have said that the total distance from the highest sphere to the boundary between the heavens and the earth is 1,000,980 *farsakhs*;<sup>4</sup> that the circumference of the earth is 24,000<sup>5</sup> *mils*;<sup>6</sup> that its diameter is 7,030 *mils*; that the latitude of the earth, from the South Pole, around which revolves Canopus, and the North Pole, around which revolves the Great Bear, [is 180 degrees, and its longitude, (?) ]<sup>7</sup> along the equator, is 360 degrees, the degree being 25 *farsakhs*,<sup>8</sup> the *farsakh* 12,000 cubits, the cubit 24 fingers, and the finger six *ḥabbas*; that there are 90 degrees between the equator and each of the poles, and that twenty-four of those

1. I have been unable to identify this proverb.

2. A *farsakh* is approximately six kilometres. The term for 'latitude' is 'arḍ'; it is quite unclear what Abū Ḥatīm is referring to, and the figure given is likely corrupt.

3. The term translated 'surface' is *qabāla*; although the wording is odd, the meaning is fairly certain. But the expected figure would be 47,300 *farsakhs*; see W. Hartner, 'Mediaeval Views on Cosmic Dimensions and Ptolemy's *Kitāb al-Manṣūrah*', in *Mélanges Alexandre Koyré* (Paris, 1964), p. 256f., and B. R. Goldstein, *The Arabic Version of Ptolemy's Planetary Hypotheses* (Philadelphia, PA, 1967), pp. 7–12.

4. The expected figure, based on Ptolemy's figures as given by Goldstein (previous note), would be 28,425,700 *farsakhs*.

5. Reading *arba'a wa-'ishrūn alf* for *arba'umi'a wa-'ishrūn alf*.

6. A *mīl* is a third of a *farsakh*.

7. The text is apparently defective here, and something like this must be supplied.

8. This figure yields a total for the circumference of the earth of 9000 *farsakhs* or 27,000 *mils*, in contrast to the figure of 24,000 *mils* given above.

degrees proceeding latitudinally along the circumference from the equator are land, the rest being covered by the Great Sea; that each region to the north and south consists of seven climes; that there are a total of 4,200 cities on earth; and that the total length of the sea from al-Qulzum<sup>1</sup> to the eastern regions of China, the land of al-Wāq Wāq,<sup>2</sup> is 4,500 *farsakhs*.

Moreover, they have spoken about the volumes of the planets, stating that the volume of the sun is 164  $\frac{3}{8}$  times that of the earth,<sup>3</sup> and going on in the same way to speak about the volumes of the rest of the planets. Now these are matters which send intellects reeling just to hear about, and which weary tongues just to describe, much less to express judgment on. Who could possibly attain this by his nature, derive it by his cleverness, and reach such conclusions by his powers of discovery? Who would be capable of coming up with the *Almagest*, with all it has to say about observational astronomy, the structures and causes of the spheres, astronomical instruments such as the astrolabe,<sup>4</sup> the zodiacal armillary,<sup>5</sup> and other instruments and measuring devices which are in the hands of people, having been handed down from the sages, and whose use has been learned by both elite and masses? And who would be capable of coming up with Euclid, with its figures and its information about spheres, sides, hypotenuses, and centres, with their arithmetical<sup>6</sup> and geometrical magnitudes?

Could any sensible person possibly maintain that all these matters are attainable by human cleverness, that these sages discovered them by nature that their intellects could reach so far, that they ascended into the heavens and looked out over the celestial spheres? Is that how they knew the number of the spheres and the number of the planets, and were able to distinguish between planets and the fixed stars which determine ascendants and descendants, and knew the mansions of the moon, and divided the sphere into twelve zodiacal signs, the signs into degrees, the degrees into minutes, the minutes into seconds, and the seconds into thirds, attaining such precision in their calculations? Moreover, they knew the place of each planet in its sphere, and could calculate the motions of the five planets, both direct and retrograde, as well as the motions of the two luminaries, with all their variation; for some take more than thirty years to traverse the sphere, while others do so in less than a month. In addition, there are the places of their auspicious and inauspicious aspects, and their exaltations and falls. All this has been set down by the sages in their books, their calculations being correct and well-ordered, with no

1. Classical Klysma, near modern Suez; see *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed. s. v. 'al-Qulzum'.

2. A fabulous island, potentially identifiable with Japan (as here), Madagascar, and other places; see *EL*2, s. v. Baḥr al-Hind.

3. Ptolemy's figure is 166  $\frac{1}{3}$  (Goldstein, *The Arabic Version*, p. 11).

4. *Dhāt al-ṣafā'ih*; see *EL*2, s. v. Asturlab.

5. *Dhāt al-ḥalaq*; see G. Celentano, *L'Epistola di al-Kindī sulla sfera armillare* [Risāla fī dhāt al-ḥalaq] (Naples, 1982).

6. Reading *al-'adadiyyah* for text *al-ḍarūriyyah*, 'necessary' (?).

more disagreement than the minor differences we find between different almanacs. These calculations are coherent and consistent, correlated with the passing of the years and the activity of the planets, so that one can determine the place of every planet, according to sign, degree, and minute, at any year, day, or hour.

And yet more, there is all they have to say about the judgments derived from the sciences of the heavens, the occurrence of individual phenomena high in the air, events and occurrences among the structures which encompass the climes,<sup>1</sup> and in general all the secrets of the Lord of the Worlds from beneath the earth to the highest heaven, as well as prosperity and hard times,<sup>2</sup> low prices and high, periods of good health and of plague, when to expect rain and dew, when the winds will blow, and when it will be light and dark—[...]<sup>3</sup> one receives training in these things and spends one's life learning them from those learned in them, having them instilled in him by them, studying their books, and diligently inquiring into the rules they have laid down.

How, then, can anyone claim that all this became known through individual discovery and cleverness, without instruction, the prior existence of a foundation, and inquiry into the foundations which the sages set down in these books? Can anyone actually maintain that any creature on earth has the capacity to attain knowledge of these matters through his own cleverness and by his own nature, with no teacher to learn from, or that anyone could possibly have composed these books on his own initiative as an act of pure originality? Can the chain of knowledge and learning in these things be traced backed to anything other than a celestial teacher, linked to God, the Creator of these things, whose knowledge encompasses them so that nothing is hidden from Him? Surely it is He who taught the people of this earth, by means of His revelation to His prophets, and it is He who instilled in them these calculations. If these foundations, all so coherent and consistent, did not have a single source, they would surely be subject to differences and contradictions; for when anything is a matter of cooperative human effort in this world, with several individuals observing and dealing with it directly, they always differ, and how could this fail to be the case with celestial matters, which are, as we have explained, so well structured? How utterly absurd! Anyone who would deny that the origin of all this is from the prophets, through revelation from God, the Deity of the heavens, claiming rather that it has been derived by human cleverness and is a product of human nature, is hopelessly blind, unspeakably ignorant, and lacking in any shred of intellect. As for what the apostate has said and the claims he has made in the blindness of his heart, that that is derived from astronomical observation, as well as from the foundations that have been handed down<sup>4</sup> in such

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1. It is not clear to me what Abū Ḥātim refers to here.

2. Reading *al-shiqqah* for text *al-sa'ah*.

3. Something has apparently fallen out of the text at this point.

4. Reading *al-marsūmah* for text *al-mawsūmah*.

works as the *Almagest*, Euclid, Ptolemy, and other books known by specialists in their fields, and that some of it is known by nature—we have spent a good deal of this chapter dealing with it.

But we will say yet more. Were one to bring together people from different communities—selecting those with fine intellects and perfectly balanced powers of understanding and discrimination, those with unquestionably solid judgment, refined nature, and sound talent, none of them having any prior knowledge of astronomy or having ever look into the works that have been handed down on this subject and its calculations, and were they then to inquire with their own powers of judgment, consider with their own intellects, and ratiocinate<sup>1</sup> with their own understanding, spending their entire lives at the task and striving to attain one iota of the calculations of astronomy, or even to distinguish between the planets and the fixed stars—they would be incapable even of telling the difference between Venus and Jupiter, much less anything more. How then could they come up with all the different calculations for the celestial spheres as has been done, or specify the ordering of the planets as we find it specified? Indeed, suppose one were to collect them around any of the astronomical instruments that have been devised, such as the plates of the astrolabe, or the zodiacal armillary, and then ask them how they work or what one does with them, while they turn them over in their hands, looking at both sides and seeing the incised terms, signs, degrees, hours, arcs, locations of the fixed stars, and so forth; and suppose one were then to ask them to set the diurnal arc for that day and determine the present hour and the elapsed daylight time, or to check the ascendant and the sun's altitude, or to see which sign the sun or another planets is in, without any teacher to instruct or inform them, they could spend their entire lives working on it, striving to derive it with their own intellects and natures, but as the days elapsed they would gain nothing but increased blindness and decreased guidance.

Such would be the situation with a single one of these instruments, which they could manipulate with their hands and perceive directly with their senses, using their own eyes to see what it was like and look it over thoroughly. How then could they deduce with their own natures the motions of the sphere, being unable to learn in this way what it is like? And how could they achieve the calculations of the planets, their orbital motions both direct and retrograde, and the other abstruse matters which we have already spoken of? And how could their imaginations deal with such matters that they do not observe and could not conceive of? This is crystal clear and no one can reject it, except through lying and sheer obstinacy.

The same argument applies also to astronomical observation. Suppose one were to ask people from various communities to undertake astronomical observation, all of them having the qualities of intellect, judgment, consideration, and balanced

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1. *Qāsū*, literally, 'draw analogies'.

temperament that we have described above, and to have them meet in the desert of Sinjār<sup>1</sup> and give them the task of observing the two luminaries—whose risings and settings could not be missed even by children and the dimmest of people, unlike the other five planets, which they would not be able to identify by sight—their task being to observe the motions of the sphere and thereby learn about the rising and settings; they would have no prior knowledge of the subject, nor would they have any observational instruments with them—no almanacs or astrolabes. No matter how long they spent at this, they would get nothing more out of it than staring at the planets and watching the two luminaries rise and set, and the knowledge they gleaned from regarding these things would be no more than the knowledge brute beasts have—unless, that is, they had acquired some prior knowledge and solid acquaintance with the matter, or until they were brought some observational instruments, such as almanacs, astrolabes, and the like, all this presupposing, again, some prior advanced knowledge and training with the learned. This being the case, we have refuted the apostate's argument in which he claimed that they could attain some knowledge of these sciences by observation. But if it is impossible to make any progress by observation without these instruments which we have specified, then what could it be that they came up with by means of their own cleverness, without instruction or training and with no prior foundation?

Now someone may raise an objection, pointing out that al-Ma'mūn requested a group of people to carry out observations, and that they managed to progress beyond certain discrepancies among the almanacs which already existed and thereby originate the *Mumtaḥan* almanac, this being something created afresh and representing progress through observation.<sup>2</sup> But in fact those responsible for this progress were only able to achieve it after being provided with the appropriate instruments and consulting existing almanacs; and in any case they had prior acquaintance with this matter, being dependent upon instruction, training, and advanced knowledge. Thus this was no independent discovery on their part, nor was it derivation by nature; rather, it came about by going back to the foundations, and depended on prior acquaintance and knowledge.

On the basis of this parallel, we see that astronomical observation is another instance of the general point we have been making. The apostate thus cannot argue from observation and nature, and this leaves no alternative but to concede that all of this is derived from the established sources, well known among specialists, with no role for observation or nature; and thus there can be no valid independent discovery in these matters, except by way of instruction and recourse to the rules laid down by the sages, with support and revelation from God. Without this,

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1. So MS A, for text Sabkhā', but the reading is doubtful. Sinjār is some seventy miles west of Mosul.

2. On *al-Zij al-mumtaḥan*, 'the tested almanac', see J. Vernet, 'Las 'tabulae probatae'', in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa* (Barcelona, 1956), vol. 2, pp. 501–522.

independent discovery is impossible for people. But if this is true, then we may validly conclude that those sages were unable to discover anything by means of their own cleverness and nature, and that the origin of all that must be revelation, as we have stated. They were not able to ascend to the heavens and thereby become aware of these hidden things; rather, God disclosed them to them by means of a revelation coming from Him. For He—be He exalted and glorified—‘knows the unseen and does not disclose His unseen to anyone, except for a messenger with whom He is well pleased.’<sup>1</sup> Glorified be He above permitting anyone to share in the knowledge of these unseen things without Himself granting this to him, and far exalted be He beyond such a thing!

### Section III: The Origin of the Knowledge of Drugs

In the section on astronomy we have dealt sufficiently with that subject, God willing. We have also had something to say about medicine; but we will now return to that topic in order to treat it comprehensively. The apostate has claimed that: ‘People became acquainted with the effects of drugs on bodies, and learned how they are constituted, by means of tasting and smelling, achieving this progress by means of nature.’ He also included this claim in what he mentioned about the goose swimming by nature.

In reply, we say: Learning about drugs by nature is the same as learning about the stars. Now someone might object, saying that this is a subject which is more accessible than astronomy, since drugs are here on earth and can be perceived directly by the senses—and the apostate has claimed that they have become known by means of tasting and smelling—while the stars are in the heavens and the sphere cannot be sensed or touched, and therefore the case of drugs is not the same as that of something that those interested cannot reach out and grasp. But to this we say: It is true that drugs are directly accessible to the senses, and that one can taste and smell them. But we would like to point out that these drugs are found in different lands, widely separated from one another. Some are imported from the East, others from the West, and yet others from the South and the North. For instance, myrobalan is imported from India, mastic from Byzantium, musk from Tibet, cinnamon from China, silkstone (?)<sup>2</sup> from the land of the Turks, opium from Egypt, aloe from Yemen, borax from Armenia, and so forth for all the various drugs which come from east and west. Some have offensive odours, others smell pleasant; some are bitter, some sweet, some pungent, some spicy, differing in taste in these ways. Some consist of the bark of trees, others of their roots, their leaves, their fruits, their flowers, or their sap. Some are stones, and various sorts of minerals from the earth, such as the different kinds and colours of alum and nitre coming from a wide

1. Qur’ān 72:26f.

2. *Ḥaṣā’ al-khazz*, not listed in the *pharmacopeiae* I have consulted.

variety of lands, including Armenia, Byzantium, and Kirmān, and other mineral salts and stones from the earth. Then there are the galls of birds, wild beasts, and other land and sea animals, as well as their brains, lungs, and other organs; the flesh of lethally poisonous snakes, used as antidotes and in other ways; and different kinds of collyrium<sup>1</sup> from birds, beasts, reptiles, and insects. For example, scorpions are dried and used in an electuary to treat gout, or burned and their ashes used in an infusion for the sufferer from kidney stones, or macerated into an ointment good against gross tumours; flies are used in an ointment with which one dresses scorpion stings; frogs are useful in removing aching teeth; and hornets and Spanish flies are effective in making hair grow. There is also animal urine and excrement, from both domestic and wild beasts, bird droppings, and even human faeces and urine; for example, camel manure is used in a electuary against quartenary fever, the urine of Arabian camels is used as a medicament for crippling rheumatism, various drugs are macerated in human urine for dandruff, human faeces is ground dry and blown into the throat of someone attacked by diphtheria or used wet as a compress, dove droppings are put into an electuary taken to increase sexual potency, and bat guano is used in several drugs. Beyond these, there are many other drugs we have not mentioned, imported from various lands and having various names in the different languages of the people of those lands, who constitute different communities in rivalry and conflict with one another.

Where, then, are those sages, whose opinions were in agreement, who all possessed fine intellects and perfect natures, with strong bodies and long lives, who spoke with one voice, cooperating and helping one another, who roamed through the climes of the world and travelled around its lands and islands, associating with every community and living in every land, and learning the language of the people of every land and island, so that they knew the names of the drugs to be found in every place, and experimented with them, becoming acquainted with their trees and herbs, discovering their qualities, and learning by taste and smell the specific effects of all the drugs with their various uses and natures? For some of them affect the brain, some the liver, some the spleen, and some the bladder; some loose and others bind; each one has its specific effect on one of the organs in either the upper or the lower parts of the body. Some are such lethal poisons that one who tastes them finds himself given the taste of death within an hour, and they can be used as medications only by smelling, not tasting. Where is the one who could become acquainted with specific effects like these in such drugs by tasting and smelling, and learn the proper weights and quantities to be administered, down to the *qīrāṭ* and the *mithqāl*,<sup>2</sup> by means of nature and inspiration? For some of these are administered in a dosage of a single *qīrāṭ* or less, while others are administered in a dosage

1. *Kuhl*, perhaps a corruption in the text.

2. The *mithqāl* varied regionally from about three to five grams. There are twenty-four *qīrāṭs* (carats) in a *mithqāl*.



of twenty *mithqāls* or more, and if the quantity is too much or too little more harm than good results; there are poisons, in particular, for which an overdose is fatal and an underdose ineffective. There are also cases where a compound potion consists of fifty different kinds of drugs or more, each in a different weight or proportion that one must not go over or under.

Where, then, are those sages who have made a thorough study of all these drugs, tasting of tree after tree and fruit after fruit, learning how they grow, becoming familiar with their qualities, and determining their ratios, equivalents, and quantities; and who have also made a thorough study of all the birds, wild beasts, and domestic animals in the world, one animal after another, tasting their gall, and one bird after another, as well as plunging into the seas and bringing forth their animals, and tasting the flesh, brains, urine, and dung of all of these, including even human urine and faeces; and who have thus become acquainted with all this through taste and smell, and have learned by nature and progressive discovery the effect of every single thing in each of these categories and how it flows through the blood vessels, each medicament bringing to bear its own action on the malady for which it was concocted, in the upper or lower part of the body, in its interior or on its exterior, after it has reached the stomach and mixed with the blood to form a single thing, and then been dispersed from the stomach into the various organs and blood vessels, that is, the circulatory system? Is it possible to maintain that a group of people actually cooperated, having strong bodies and long lives and travelling around the world until they came to know these things, after gathering them all and testing them by means of their taste and smell, and thus determined their natures, all this by means of their own nature and inspiration, as the apostate claims, and that, moreover, they all agreed, having no differences of opinion about any of this? For, surely, if all this came from a group engaged in cooperative effort, some disagreement would necessarily arise in something of it; and then there would be none of this consistency that we in fact observe in the field of pharmacology, with general agreement among physicians and experts on the natures of such substances. This would hold true even if we spoke only of a group convening in a single land and gathering the drugs to be found there; how, then, can we imagine such a thing given the vast distances between the various lands, and the difficulties involved in gathering and testing these drugs, without some prior acquaintance with them on the part of those testing them and some foundation to which they can have recourse?

Someone might claim that it was the people of each land who tested and became acquainted with what was to be found there in their own land first, and then these things were subsequently transferred from land to land and gathered in that way. But we reply that this is not possible, since their effect appears only after they have been gathered together and mixed. How could the people of each land know about what exists there in their land in isolation, before this gathering together and mixing? How could they know the proper quantity of each thing in their own land in

isolation, without knowing the quantity of the corresponding components from another land, which they were unacquainted with and had not tested?

We maintain that the knowledge of the natures of these drugs must necessarily originate either from a single man, or from a group; but if from a group, then it could only have occurred in the way we have just described. But if someone maintains that such a group did meet together at a single time and thus reached this agreement and arrived at this knowledge, he has put forth a view that no intellect can accept. For it is impossible to imagine a group dispersing through all these lands from the east to the west, each one arriving at the knowledge of something of the substances to be found in his own land, in the way we have described, and then all of them meeting together, gathering all these substances together and agreeing about them, without any of them being overtaken by death or any of the world's misfortunes before they could achieve this. This flatly contradicts good sense.

If, on the other hand, one should maintain that one group after another became acquainted with these things by means of their nature in different times and various ages, and then subsequently gathered them all together, this is even more absurd. For if we have one medicament which is a mixture of fifty sorts of drugs, it is not possible that the views of different people scattered over various times and diverse places could be combined to produce knowledge of it, one man having arrived at the knowledge of one thing at one time and another coming along at another time and attaining the knowledge of something else, and then these views being combined with regard to that single mixture composed of fifty sorts of drugs, without there occurring some sort of disagreement. This is even more objectionable than the previous proposal.

Finally, if one should claim that a single man became acquainted with these natures, living a sufficiently long time so as to travel around the world and discover them, in their variety as we have described it; this is even more remote from what intellect can accept. Could anyone test all these drugs without examining all trees and plants, their fruits, leaves, roots, and so forth, and all animals, including predators and other wild beasts, domestic animals, birds, sea life, reptiles, and the rest, so as to know what is harmful and what beneficial, what useful and what useless, of their flesh, gall, and other parts, as well as their urine and dung, and to know the specific characteristics in each? What intellect would not reject this, and what intellect would hearken to it and accept it?

Was it a group, then, who arrived at the knowledge of the natures of these drugs or was it a single person? If a group, was it at one time, or at various times? And suppose them to have had the fortitude to taste these filthy things we have mentioned, such as urine and dung, despite their putridity and foul smell and taste; how could they survive their lethal poisons? For among them are things so poisonous they kill instantaneously. We have ourselves seen an herb that grows in the deserts of our region and that, if eaten by someone who does not know it,

kills him on the spot; and there are many others like that as well. Where in the world is there the one who could discover the natures of these things by taste and smell, and by his own nature and inspiration? Where in our own time is there someone who has discovered anything of the sort so as to use the known to render judgment on the unknown?<sup>1</sup> Is it not the case that anyone who makes such a claim is wanting in intellect and bereft of understanding? And is it not the case that anyone who hearkens to such a thing and does not reject it is even blinder in his heart and further astray?

By my life! There is a group among those who style themselves ‘philosophers’ who have made ridiculous claims like these, making up lies about the ancient sages and associating them with silly fables unworthy of them. They say, for instance, that Plato travelled into a mountainous region in the far north, where the sun does not shine and plants do not grow, and stayed there for a time looking for a way to conquer death through experimentation and medicaments, seeking mixtures that would prolong life, and that he had with him a thousand men, whom he sent out across the earth, east, west, north, and south, to taste what they found and seek drugs.<sup>2</sup> They also say that Aristotle sent out some people with Alexander<sup>3</sup> to find out about the ends of the earth and what they were like, which places were more salubrious and which less so, which more wholesome and which more polluted, how many climes there are in the world and how many *farsakhs* is the extent of each, and to bring back drugs and try them out. Those who travelled east reached a place where they suffered from the heat of the sun and feared that they would be burned up, and dug underground chambers and entered them. Those who travelled west continued on to a place where they were unable to go further, because of the quantity and intensity of the vapour there; they reported that they saw the sun enter the sea, while others said that it entered the heavens, and yet others said it went behind the vapour. Those who travelled northward were stopped by the cold and ice; they fell ill and then returned. And those who travelled southward reached a land in which there are drugs, medicaments, and minerals unknown in our lands.<sup>4</sup> Such are the claims they make about Plato and Aristotle. As for Pythagoras, they claim that he ascended into the air, attaining successively to the worlds of Nature, Soul, and Intellect, and observed all the forms to be seen there, the beauty and splendour, and the lights.<sup>5</sup> It was Pythagoras who had as a pupil Filānus, who

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1. *Yahkum bi'l-shāhid 'ala'l-ghā'ib*; this is standard terminology in theological argumentation.

2. I have not found parallels to this account.

3. Dhu'l-Qarnayn; ‘the Two-Horned’; for the standard identification of this Qur’ānic figure with Alexander the Great, see *El2*, s. v. ‘al-Iskandar’.

4. I have not found parallels to this account.

5. Abū Ḥātim has already mentioned this purported ascension in chapter IV of this work, where he attributes the statement to Pythagoras’ pupil Filānus. The passage is borrowed from ps.Ammonius; see next note.

travelled to India and from whom Brakhmas acquired philosophy, as has been described in a previous chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Then to these ridiculous claims they add their claims that the origins of all things go back to these men, and that everything from which the human race derives benefit and whose knowledge has come to people, including astronomy, medicine, and other things, was derived by them. They are supposed to have disseminated this knowledge to the horizons, composing eighty books of medicine for the Persians and thirteen books of medicine, wisdom, and aphorisms for the Indians, and composing all these books out of their own opinions and putting them together with their own intellects, all on the basis of their own inspiration and nature, without any support from God—be He exalted and glorified. They even go so far as to claim that they invented the urn of unquenchable fire in Persia, which is worshipped by the Magians, as well as other suchlike fabricated claims unacceptable to the intellect.

How is it that the apostate did not mention these fables, claimed by these errant liars, along with what he mentioned of the claims of the Magians and Manichaeans, and the fables he retailed from those who made them up about them, such as the story that Mānī used to be snatched from among them and ascend into the air to the height of the sun, where sometimes he would remain for hours and other times for days before redescending, and that he elevated Shāpūr—for whom he had written the *Shāpūrakān*—into the atmosphere and made him disappear there for a time?<sup>2</sup> Surely these claims are no different from the claims of those liars that Pythagoras ascended into the air, reaching the worlds of Nature, Soul, and Intellect, until he was able to attain this knowledge by direct observation. Is not this exactly what the Manichaeans claim about Mānī, as like as like can be? Why is it then that the apostate has no word of criticism against the self-styled philosophers of his own party for these claims, when he criticizes and lambastes the Muslims for what the Manichaeans claim about Mānī? Why does he not hang these bells on his own neck and those of the adherents of his own party? Surely he is more worthy of them, belonging as he does to the same party as those who makes these claims for Pythagoras, and circulate these lies about Plato and Aristotle.

As for claiming some close relationship between Muslims on the one hand and Magians and Manichaeans on the other, that is like making the elephant the offspring of the she-ass. Should he justify this by the fact that Manichaeans and Magians affirm prophecy as the Muslims do, we reply that not everyone who

1. 'Brakhmas' is certainly Brahma; 'Filānus' is unidentified. Abū Ḥātim has given further details about Pythagoras' Iranian and Indian pupils in chapter IV of this work. His source is the ps.-Ammonius; see Rudolph, ed., *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios*, pp. 166–185.

2. Mānī's ascent to the sun is reported in several sources, but I have not seen parallels to his levitation of Shāpūr. The *Shāpūrakān* was Mānī's sole book composed in Pahlavi. See G. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes: 'Abd al-Jabbār et ses devanciers* (Paris, 1974), pp. 162, 281.

affirms prophecy is to be believed in all his claims, nor does such a person speak truly and correctly when affirming the heretical notions they have concocted. We confirm what he says when he affirms prophecy, but reject as lies the absurdities they concoct. But if the apostate claims to reject as false the claims made about Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, maintaining that they<sup>1</sup> disagreed on these matters, just as they disagreed on first principles—as we have mentioned, showing how they contradicted one another in their statements and called one another liars—then why does he raise internal disagreement as a argument against the adherents of religious confessions, given that the disagreement to be found among his own leaders is so hideously blatant as to be unexceedable?

But perhaps he would have recourse to an argument which I have in fact heard from him, when we once debated on this topic. At that time I challenged him, saying, ‘The disagreements among your people are worse and more blatant than those you claim against the adherents of religious traditions,’ and he replied, ‘On this point you and we are like two men who have fallen out, of whom one says to the other, ‘Isn’t your sister a notorious slut?’ and the other replies, ‘Perhaps, but your sister is also an infamous trollop.’ That is how he answered, falling back on such coarseness, his literal meaning being ‘Perhaps, but if we have disagreed so have the founders of religious traditions.’ I then said to him, ‘If that is the way things are, then it is best to adhere to the religious tradition<sup>2</sup> of Muḥammad, and more beneficial in both this world and the next. In this world, one thereby avoids bloodshed, keeps one’s property and family inviolate, preserves standards of decency, and protects lines of descent through proper birth after legitimate marriage, and this is more befitting the sense of honour, even among those who do not believe in Islam, than granting complete sexual liberty to mothers, daughters, and sisters—aside from all the other benefits which we have already discussed. In the next world, there is the promise of the great and glorious reward which is beyond all comparison, and the threat of the punishment painful beyond all other pain. It shows a higher resolve to put one’s trust in this than to become enmeshed in a doctrine stripping God of His essential qualities and to fall into apostasy, a position which does nothing to avoid bloodshed, keep one’s property and family inviolate, preserve standards of decency, or protect lines of descent, and which leads in the next world to a painful punishment.’

As for the one who accepts this claim about Plato and Galen,<sup>3</sup> to him we say: Did Plato, with all his wisdom and well-grounded knowledge, not realize that if there is no way to conquer death in these populated areas of the earth where the

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1. That is, the philosophers, including those who make these claims about their predecessors. Here, as throughout his discussion, Abū Ḥātim treats the philosophers as a distinct dogmatic sect.

2. *Shari‘ah*.

3. This mention of Galen is anomalous; perhaps the text is corrupt here.

sun shines and all sorts of plants grow—and those mixtures by which one treats every malady come from such populated areas—if, I say, there is not be found here any medicament that will ward off death, then how would he find such a thing in desolate regions and among the mountains where the sun does not shine and where there are no plants to be found? How could he have so deceived himself, being taken in by his desires, after having observed and become aware that no one in the universe escapes death? Could he not draw the lesson from that? With all his wisdom, did he not have the intellect to realize this basic condition? Is this, then, anything other than a lie on the part of those misguided souls, who, wanting to magnify Plato, managed to defame him with the very thing by which they thought to dignify him?

As for those who make the further claims that Plato sent out a thousand men to the east and west of the earth, and that Aristotle sent out some people with Alexander to find out about the ends of the earth and the various climes and islands, and to bring back drugs and try them out, what we have already said about drugs and about those who claim to have discovered them by nature and cleverness should suffice. Our reply is applicable to both this group and the other, since they essentially follow the same way, and it should be convincing for anyone who is fair-minded, God willing. To that we will only add that if those who were sent out learned anything about drugs in the lands they visited of which Plato and Galen were unaware, then they were a model for Plato and Galen to follow; and in that case, where are the names of those who were more assiduous in this field than those two, and who endured more trouble in pursuing it than they did? And where are those drugs which they brought back from those lands? And why are they not credited with them the way Plato and Aristotle are credited with their books?

What these claims amount to in the end is lies and fabrications which are of a piece with the silly false claims of the apostates. The only reason we have brought them up is that the apostate, ignoring such claims as these, blamed the Muslims for the concocted absurdities that the Magians and Manichaeans claim for Zoroaster and Mānī, out of a spirit of sheer apostasy and intense hostility to Islam. The only comparison to him possible is that in the old line: 'Like the mountain goat that butted a stone one day, trying to split it; it did no damage to the stone but hurt its horns',<sup>1</sup>

#### **Section IV: All Knowledge Goes Back to the First Sage**

In our chapter on drugs we have given some idea of the difficulties they raise, despite the fact that they are on the earth and can be perceived directly by the senses, specifically by taste and smell. These difficulties are similar to those raised

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1. Although this is set out in the printed edition as verse, it does not scan; the text is probably disturbed or, less likely, the expression is proverbial but not poetical.

by the stars, although the latter are in the heavens, and the situation in learning about drugs by means of nature and cleverness is the same as that in learning about the stars. We have shown that pursuing such knowledge is in fact an arduous task, that one must rely in it on the foundations laid down by the sages, and that there is no way to attain such knowledge except by instruction, training, and following the rules they have set. Any claims other than this, about achieving anything by nature and cleverness, are false, and anyone claiming such a thing is a sinful liar guilty of terrible mendacity. These drugs can be known by taste and smell only by someone who has some prior knowledge of them, and can then taste and smell what he knows will not harm him when he does taste and smell it, having no fear of its deleterious effects, and can thus distinguish the better from the worse, the unadulterated from the adulterated, and the pure from the mixed. In this respect they can be known by smell and taste; but that a person could learn their actual nature by smell and taste, and discover the particular properties inherent in them without any prior knowledge of them, is the utmost in absurdity. The accomplished physician with pretensions to philosophy, who knows his drugs, and the man totally experienced in this field and having no knowledge of anything about it are in exactly the same position when it comes to learning the nature of something with no prior knowledge of it. Anyone claiming anything else is simply saying what is not true.

When I made this point to the apostate, he persisted in his false claims. I then asked him whether he had himself, by his nature and cleverness, discovered anything unknown to his predecessors, as an example confirming his claim. He replied, 'Yes, I can tell you about an extraordinary instance of this. I had a remarkable experience with Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl<sup>1</sup> during the time I was living in Bukhārā. He went out one day for a pleasure excursion, with me in his retinue. He led us to a pleasant spot, very green and full of flowers, and dismounted, as did we all. Examining a nearby herb, he asked me, 'What is this herb good for?' Without stopping to consider, I answered spontaneously, 'It is a diuretic.' He ordered the herb picked. Then food was brought out and a table set up, and the herb was placed on one side of it. We sat down with the *amīr*, and he invited one of his attendants, who was accustomed to dining with him, to sit on the side of the table where the herb was placed. We began to eat, and the attendant took the herb, just as one would take any green, not knowing anything about it or what had transpired. But before finishing his meal he rose from the table and went off to urinate. As he was going, his master asked him about was the matter and why he was leaving the table. He replied, 'I have an uncontrollable urge to urinate.' The *amīr* and everyone else were amazed at this.'

I asked him, 'Did you know about this herb prior to this time?' He replied, 'No, by God, I had never seen it before and did not recognize it'. I asked, 'Is this

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1. Ruler of the Sāmānid dynasty in Bukhārā, 295–301/907–914. It was his first cousin, Maṣṣūr b. Ishāq, to whom al-Rāzī dedicated his celebrated medical work the *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī*.

herb to be found in our land, and are you acquainted with it now?' He replied, 'No, by God, I am not acquainted with it and I do not know whether it is to be found here or not'. I asked, 'Are you not familiar with those charlatans<sup>1</sup> who sit along the road and dupe the commons with their chicanery?' He replied, 'Is there anyone more familiar with them than I?' I then said, 'This story of yours falls under the category of such chicanery, not that of knowledge of the natures of drugs gained by nature, cleverness, and experience'. He replied, 'What could be cleverer than this?' I retorted, 'How can this be considered cleverness at all? How can you compare this to the cleverness of those sages, who according to what you claim discovered the knowledge of the nature of things by their cleverness and derived it by tasting and smelling, not, you say, having any knowledge of that except by cogitation, consideration, analogizing, experiment, smelling, and tasting? Then, you say, they recorded in their books the knowledge they had attained, so that it became a foundation that could be relied on. But then, while maintaining that these foundations were laid down in this fashion, you state that you yourself spoke about this herb spontaneously, without reflection, deliberation, or experimentation; and you say that you had no prior knowledge of this herb and had never tasted or smelled it, and that even now you are not acquainted with it and do not know whether it is to be found in these lands or not. Is not what you say here simply chicanery, and is not your claim closer to chicanery than to the cleverness and experimentation of the sages? Is not this in fact the very essence of chicanery? You claim that you are the best acquainted of people with charlatans; again, is this not the very essence of chicanery? And is not chicanery simply deception and hoodwinking? And if this was the way those sages acquired knowledge of the natures of drugs, then they too were charlatans who deceived and hoodwinked people. But if that were so, then nothing they handed down would be valid, and people would gain no benefit from their books, since chicanery is false and deceptive, having no basis and no coherence. And while you may have foisted your chicanery successfully on that man, we will not be taken in by you. This is the weakest argument you have come up with yet'. At this point he gave up the debate.

I ask God's forgiveness for anything I have added to or left out of this account; while the wording may have some additions and omissions; this was the gist of it. The only reason I have told this story is that, when I asked the apostate what knowledge of the natures of drugs he had discovered in his entire life through his own nature and cleverness, what we have mentioned is the only thing he could come up with to confirm his claim—and this despite his claim to be the equal of Hippocrates and Galen in medicine, and of Socrates and Aristotle in the other

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1. *Zarrāqūn*, or possibly to be read *razzāqūn*; 'chicanery' below is *zarq* or *razq*. For a discussion of this term, referring specifically to roadside astrologers and fortune-tellers, see C. E. Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld* (Leiden, 1976), p. 257f.



philosophical sciences and the knowledge of natures. And such is what all the claims of the apostates regarding knowledge of things by means of cleverness and nature amount to—self-contradictory foolishness. If this story which he told is true, you can see what a fool he is; if he was lying, that is just what we would expect.

As for what the apostate mentioned about this subject in his book, saying that ‘some of these things have been passed on from generation to generation ever since the beginning of time’, if by ‘the beginning of time’ he means the ‘absolute time’ which he believes to be eternal, making it part of the very basis of his system and claiming a distinction between it and ‘relative time’, then he has made an absurd claim and contradicted himself.<sup>1</sup> For he maintains that ‘absolute time’ is eternal and infinite; but he has not claimed that medicine is eternal along with this time. If, on the other hand, he means the ‘relative time’ corresponding to the motions of the celestial sphere, he is still guilty of absurdity. For medicine and astronomical calculation were only taken up after the appearance of mankind, and mankind is the last of the generated beings to appear in the world, according to both the adherents of religious traditions and the philosophers, while the celestial sphere, its motions, and other things connected with it are prior to all generated beings; therefore, the beginning of knowledge of these subjects does not correspond to the beginning of time from this perspective, either. But we say, rather, that the science of medicine, the knowledge of the natures of drugs, and other sorts of knowledge, including astronomy and philosophy, have been acquired by each later generation from an earlier, in a chain whose beginning is a sage who was the first to possess them, and that that sage became acquainted with these complexities by means of support and revelation from God—be He exalted and glorified—and is to be counted among the prophets. For no one has the capability to attain to the knowledge of these things in any other way.

The argumentation we have presented will suffice as an indication and proof of our position. We will conclude by stating that if the sages to whom these foundations are attributed really were their starting point, then this occurred in the way we have stated. If not, then they took them, piece by piece, from those who preceded them, each of them, like their predecessors in turn, depending on support from God—be He exalted and glorified—until one finally reaches someone who really was the first and whom God initiated by teaching him these things. For God—be He exalted and glorified—sent His prophets and taught them, from every sort of thing, that which people need in their affairs, both secular and religious; and that is what makes the world function properly. If God—be He exalted and glorified—had not taught them they would not have known. For He created all creatures, He knows

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1. Abū Bakr’s distinction between ‘absolute time’, one of his five eternal entities, and the ‘relative time’ measured by and dependent on celestial motions, has been discussed in the first chapter of this work.

all that is apparent and hidden, and He does not give a share of His knowledge of these things to any of His creatures except the Prophet. He is 'the Knower of the Unseen, and does not reveal His Unseen to anyone except whom He approves as a Messenger';<sup>1</sup> He 'knows best where to place His message';<sup>2</sup> 'and He gives no one a share in His governance'.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Qur'ān 72:26f.

2. Qur'ān 6:124.

3. Qur'ān 18:26.

## Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī

Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Kirmānī was a prominent Ismaili philosopher and a prolific author who lived during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh. Kirmānī, who has been called by some the ‘Ismaili Ibn Sīnā’, died some time after 411/1021. He spent a major part of his life as a *dā‘ī* (missionary) in Iraq and Persia, and was given the title *Hujjat al-‘Irāqayn*, ‘Proof of the Two Iraqs’, the Arab and the Persian. Not much is known of his activities in that region, but based on the title of his book *Kitāb al-majālis al-Baghdādiyyah wa’l-Baṣriyyah*, which has not survived, he must have had extensive discussions with the learned circles of Baghdad and Baṣra. In the early part of the fifth/eleventh century, al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh was pronounced by some extremist circles as ‘divine’ and Kirmānī went to Cairo at the invitation of the Ismaili *da‘wah* headquarters there to settle a dispute that had erupted concerning the nature of the Imamate and the ‘divinity’ of the caliph. Kirmānī wrote a treatise entitled *al-Risālat al-wā‘izah* refuting the ‘divinity’ of al-Ḥākim and arguing for the absolute transcendence of God. He also wrote a major work (408/1017) entitled *al-Wā‘izah fī nafy da‘wat ulūhiyyat al-Ḥākim bi-amr Allāh* (Sermon on the Refutation of the Claim to Divinity) as a response to the supporters of the ‘divinity’ of al-Ḥākim.

Kirmānī could be considered as a link between Abū Ḥātim Rāzī and Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and some of his work, such as *al-Aqwāl al-dhahabiyyah* (Golden Sayings) which is a direct descendent of Rāzī’s *A’lām al-nubuwwah* (Science of Prophecy), attests to this intellectual lineage.

While it does not appear that later Ismaili thinkers of the Fatimid period were influenced by Kirmānī, he had been a voice of moderation arguing against certain extreme positions of Druzes, as well as other Shi‘i groups, who practised antinomianism and were engaged in dispute over the observance of the *Sharī‘ah*. In his arguments against the deification of the Imams, Kirmānī quotes Jewish and Christian sources, often in Hebrew and Syriac. He had a vast knowledge of Islamic metaphysics and made an attempt to treat a wide range of philosophical topics in

his work *Kitāb al-riyāḍ* (Book of the Garden). The discussions contained in this work are indicative of the sort of issues that were of concern to Persian philosophical circles.

The first translation we have included in this chapter is from the *Rāḥat al-ʿaql*, (Repose of the Intellect), a treatise that is generally regarded as the most important work of Kirmānī. This book, which in its rigour and intellectual profundity is comparable to the *Najāh* (Salvation) or *Shifāʾ* (Healing) of Ibn Sīnā, traces the development of Ismaili thought from its beginning in the 'proto-Ismaili' works of the second/eighth century, to its zenith in the work of Kirmānī. *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* is a *summa* of philosophical and theological issues pertinent to Ismaili thought, a work that is indicative of the earliest attempts to systematize Ismaili philosophy and to bring about an understanding of the truth based on two precepts: first, one has to have lived a morally virtuous life by upholding tenets of the faith; and second, the adept must have prepared himself philosophically. *Rāḥat al-ʿaql* is an allegorical work that has been arranged in chapters and paragraphs. Chapters are called *aswār* (walls) and paragraphs, *mashāriʿ* (paths). The novice has to travel through fifty-six paths within seven walls in order for the soul to gain the knowledge of reality. Reality, Kirmānī argues, is divided into four different domains: first the world of divine creation or the incorporeal world (*aʿlām al-ibdāʾ*); second, the corporeal realm (*aʿlām al-jism*); third, the domain of religion (*aʿlām al-dīn*), which corresponds to the hierarchy of the Ismaili *daʿwah*, and fourth the return of the world to its original oneness with God. Consciousness of this metaphysical process is attainable through philosophical knowledge and in this respect Kirmānī's metaphysical scheme shows the extent of influence of the Neoplatonic concept of emanation (*inbiʿāth*).

In the first section of this chapter, Kirmānī offers an argument for the existence of God using a version of the cosmological argument. In the second section, he speaks of the way the Unmoved Mover moves all things then proceeds to a discussion of questions concerning the Divine Intellect and Nature. The third section offers a discourse on the question of emanation. The manner in which emanation is issued forth from the First Intellect and the necessary and unintentional nature of it are among issues dealt with here.

The second part is a translation of the whole of *al-Risālah al-durriyah* (The Brilliant Epistle), which deals with God's unity (*tawḥīd*) from a philosophical point of view. Kirmānī begins by praising God and the Prophet Muḥammad and then explains the reason for writing this treatise. A discussion concerning the nature of unity and the unified is presented and different connotations of the concept of unity are investigated both conceptually and linguistically. There is an elaboration of the relationship between unity and a person who stands in a unified relationship as well as discussion of such topics as multiplicity and necessity.

M. Aminrazavi

## REPOSE OF THE INTELLECT

*Rāḥat al-‘aql*

Translated for this volume by Daniel C. Peterson from Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-‘aql*, ed. M. K. Ḥusayn and M. M. Ḥilmī (Leiden, 1953), pp. 59–68.

To establish the creation, which is the first existent, that its existence is not by virtue of its own nature, and that it is a cause in which all the other existents culminate, and that it is neither a body, nor a potentiality in a body, but that it transcends the corporeal world.

[59] We affirm that, because of the Most High's exaltation above all degrees of rank, whether of perfection and deficiency or of unity and multiplicity, and because the privative particle *lā* denies of Him all attributes and all descriptions which are the mark of originated things and, as we have previously indicated, places Him beyond what intellects can reach by their light and their thoughts, it is hopeless to find a way to comprehend Him by means of any attribute. Thus, there must be other than the Most High, something of which attributes may be predicated, an existent, which is within the capability of intellects to attain and of discourse to discuss. Since that thing other than the Most High, whose existence is by the Most High's originating it, is that of which intellects are able to attain discursive knowledge and about which they can give information derived from attributes present in the created cosmos, we affirm that that which ranks first in existence is conceived to have not been, and then to have come to be, by way of creation and origination, from nothing, on the basis of nothing, in nothing, by means of nothing, for nothing, with nothing. It is the first thing. Thus, its existence is, in terms of ranking, an enduring existence and a first existence, by reason of its being a first end and a first cause, on which the existence of all other existents depends, heading toward the second end. An analogy to this is found in the number one, in its relationship to the existence of numbers generally. It is ranked first and established by its being a first end and a first cause on which depends the existence of all other numbers, heading toward the second end. This establishes it with regard to the ranking of the existents. With regard to actuality, and its necessary emergence into existence, if the existence of the first were not established there would be no way for the second to attain unto existence, and if the existence of the second were not established, there would be no way for the third to attain unto existence. Thus there can be no existence for the second and the third except by establishment of the existence of that which precedes them, and is a cause of their existence.

[60] From the existence of the third and the fourth and other existents the existence of a first is established. It is a cause, the absence of which would entail the

nonexistence of subsequent members of the series. Thus, by their very existence, existent things establish that there is a first principle from which they descend, in their ranks, in existence. That first principle we call the First Intellect and the First Existent. Its existence is not by its own nature, but by the creative act of the Exalted One, blessed be He.

Moreover, we affirm, on the contrary, that, since the existents are dependent for their existence on causes prior to them, and since every existent thing, in its nature, is the act of that which precedes it in the chain, being its object in terms of matter and an agent in that which is lower than it in terms of matter, the existence of existent things indicates necessarily that all existents terminate in a cause which is the certain terminus of all causes. This ultimate cause, in its nature is an act proceeding from the One; of Whom it is inappropriate to say that He is an Agent. It is an object, but not material. It is, furthermore an agent, but not in a matter that is other than itself. That is to say that the existence of the existent thing is dependent upon the establishment of its cause that precedes it, whose nonexistence would entail its own nonexistence. Take the number nine as an example, which is a cause for the existence of ten. When its existence is not established, the existence of ten is impossible. Thus, if the existence of the existent things is established, so too are the various causes established—as is the fact that they continue to ascend from multiplicity toward that which is prior to them, growing fewer until they culminate in a single established thing, a cause which terminates all causes—like the number nine, whose existence indicates the existence of eight, and the existence of eight which points to the existence of seven. Thus, the process of ascent from multiplicity does not conclude until it resolves itself in that from which they come to exist, culminating in an established number one. This is the cause of all of them, and it is by it that they exist. Thus, that number one is prior in rank and its existence is not by its own nature. Rather, it is, in its nature, an act proceeding from the One of Whom it is inappropriate to say that He is an agent. It is an object, but not material. It is, furthermore an agent, but not in a matter that is other than itself. Rather, we say that it is an act in its nature, by reason of its being a first existent according to what we said afterward about Him of Whom it is inappropriate to say that He is an Agent. Thus, by reason of its being an agent and an act, its being an act necessarily implies its quiddity. This leads to what does not end, according to what we made clear in our treatise known as ‘The Meadow’, bearing witness to what we said about the establishment of a first, on whose existence depends the existence of all else, and resolving the existents into their causes and their ending in one whose existence is not [61] by its own nature, but by reason of another. That is to say that we find the human being, which is the last of existents and their second end, to resolve into many things which are objects, like the matter from which he was made, are all of them, the realm of nature. Many things are agents, for which the realm of nature becomes a matter and in which they act in order to bring to existence that which

is supposed to exist, like the human being and other things. These are, all of them, active. These are the angels to whom the world is entrusted. He—that is, the human being—is an agent acting in matters other than him when creating artificial forms, and an object of the realm of nature, and an act of the angels who are actual and His activity comes by reason of his being the act of another who undertook his actualization, that is, his creation. We found the realm of nature and the agents in it divisible into things that are not, in multiplicity, like the realm of nature in what unites it and the actors in it, but fewer in number. These are prime matter and form, together, and that to which prime matter and form become matter in the creation of the celestial spheres and the elements. These are the angels, by which I mean the active element. The realm of nature and the agents in it are agents to the human being and various others of the existents, but are also an object to that from which they spring. As for the realm of nature, it is composed of prime matter and form; and as for the agents there is that which is, like them, an agent, but is prior to them, and an act to the active angel who is prior to all. And their actuality comes from their being an act to that which actualized them.

We found that prime matter and form and the agent that acts in them resolve into one thing, from whom their existence derives, because analysis comes to an end with the principle of multiplicity by natures who admit of nothing behind their principle, which is two, except one. What forbids their resolution into two things, playing the role of mothers and fathers or of the human beings and prime matter that act upon them is that it would lead to an infinite regress, which would cause the nonexistence of the existents. Thus, it has been established by the culmination of analysis in one, upon which depends the existence of all that is other than it, that this one is the established cause, and it is an act in its nature, and an agent in its nature, and an object of action by its nature. Then we affirm, since the potential is deficient, and since its emergence to actuality (which is the degree of perfection) cannot occur except by reason of that upon which it depends and that which is completely actual in its nature and its act, and the souls of men in the realm of nature are potential and, hence, deficient, and their emergence to actuality cannot occur therefore except by reason of something else which is actual, complete in its nature and its act, and since there are those among the souls of men [62] who do emerge to actuality, like the prophets and the legatees<sup>1</sup> and the Imams, upon whom be peace, and their successors in attaining the two perfections and the two happinesses and becoming a focal point of the virtues and completely free of vices, it is the fully actual in his nature and act by

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1. In the Ismaili view of sacred history, each 'speaking prophet' or 'enunciator' (*nāṭiq*) is followed by an immediate successor known as a *waṣī* (the Arabic term means 'legatee' or 'executor of a will) or an *asās* ('foundation'). The prophet brings a revelation or a religious law, the true interpretation of which is entrusted to his immediate heir. Thus, for instance, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalīb was the *waṣī* or *asās* to the Prophet Muḥammad. The legatee was also the first of the Imams.

whom they attain their perfection and ascend to the degree of actuality, and it is by their dependence upon him that they exist as complete. Were it not for him, their emergence to actuality could not have occurred. For it is by something completely actual in its nature and acts that potentially actual beings embark upon their emergence to actuality.

Its nature must inevitably be either a body or a potentiality in a body, or else neither a body nor a potentiality in a body, but transcendent to the world of corporeality, for he transcends the world of corporeality. It is not true that he is a body or a potentiality in a body, since all that is comprised within the world of corporeality, both bodies and potentialities in bodies, is matter which is acted upon and which, thanks to its deficiencies, receives emanation in order to achieve perfection. It is incapable of acting to grant everything what is appropriate to that, and it is unable to bring it to the end that represents its perfecting, except by means of another that is actual. That is like the higher bodies, which do not attain to actuality by themselves except in the presence of lower bodies which receive their act and are affected by them, and it is like the lower bodies which do not attain to actuality by themselves except by reason of the higher bodies which affect them. They are, all of them—both those that act and those that are acted upon—incapable, by reason of their being the kind of thing that is an object, deficient in their activity from creating many things, except with the help and assistance of another. This is like glass, which nature is unable to bring into being in the same way it produces gold and other such things. The most that it is able to do is to produce that which is then treated by human beings and made into glass. Or, again, this is like iron, which nature is unable to bring into existence in the same way it brings silver into existence, and its existence is dependent upon its management by human beings, and their treatment of it, and their extraction of it from that which is itself incapable of bringing it to the degree of an existent. Or it is like women, whose nature is to be adorned with jewellery and clothing, and an artistic representation on the cheek and dye in the hand, all of which is perfection to them. [63] It can only produce them, and that which makes an adornment for them is accomplished and completed by human beings. Like the souls of men who are incapable of extracting it/them completely, not needing others in their actuality and their becoming is an object, needing another to project its act and to perfect it, deficient in its nature and its act by reason of its nature being composed of two things, each one of them distinct from the other. Like the human being, whose nature is composed of two things—body and soul, each one needs the other in its existence. What is deficient by the precedence to the perfect is complete in nature and in act.

We have postulated that it is complete and perfect in its nature and complete in its action. Now, if it is perfect and complete in both nature and action, the proposition that it is deficient in its nature and action is nullified, and if the notion is



nullified that it is deficient, so too is the proposition that it is a body or a potency in a body, since bodies and whatever things are in bodies need other things and are deficient. So it is neither a body nor potency in a body, and if it is neither a body nor potency in a body, the proposition is established as soon as its existence is granted, that it transcends the corporeal world. Now if it is established that it transcends the corporeal world, we assert its being also in need of another in its act. Like the souls that receive its act, undertaking to emerge from potentiality to actuality necessitates its being deficient in its act even if it is complete in its nature. But that which is deficient in its act and complete in its nature is preceded by that which is complete in both its nature and its act, which is higher in rank and priority. From this, it has been established that that which precedes in existence, which is higher in rank, this is the actual by which the potential emerges to actuality. This is the first existent, whose nature is fully sufficient for its act, needing no other.

Since that has been established, along with the fact that the perfect prior which is the first existent is sufficient in its nature and in need of no other in its act, we ask, Is it possible that this first existent is the Most High, praised be He, Who is exalted above all attributes connected with the existence of existent things, or is it not? This is a quest whose search leads the soul to what is believed in that regard. We declare, it is not possible at all. For it is inevitable that that existent is either that from which creation appears, or it is itself the first created thing. It is absurd that it is that from which creation appears, since that which comes into existence from it is deficient in its act, and the judgment is inevitable that, if it were that from which creation originates, that which comes into existence from it would be perfect, not needing any other in its act. Now, since it is absurd that it is that from which creation appears, it is established that it is the first created thing, perfect in its act, in need of no other, the existent from it, the deficient, that which is in need of an other in its act, which is the first in existence, and the prior in existence, and the perfect in existence, and the perfection in existence, and the First Intellect and the first limit and the first created thing and the thing [64] ranked first in existence. This is the thing of which it is conceived that it was not, but then came to be by way of an act of creation, becoming perfect and eternal. It is the angel brought near to the throne, the greatest of names, and there is no God except that God Who created it.

What we have said about analysis and its culmination in an established thing in which all things culminate also holds true with regard to the realm of religious legislation, which is the prophetic work, and its witness to us is by means of balanced guardianship. It is in keeping with the divine work. That is to say that we analyse that wherein consists the perfection of the human soul, and its life, and its actualization; and we arrive at that from which its existence derives, and we find that it resolves into many things, which are brought together by two things: one

of them is the law, which unites its principles, which include the edicts governing the two worships, that of knowledge and that of practical action. In one of them is the shaping of the soul, and in the other consists its establishment as one that, by reason of the perfection of the human soul, plays the part of the macrocosmos, consisting of the celestial spheres and the elements and the stars and their natural powers from the human body and his soul, which are manifold. They are equivalent to the prophetic work, and correspond to it. The other is the Imam, who unites the dignitaries of the religious hierarchy<sup>1</sup> who preserve the religious law and establish its characteristics and promulgate its prominent points and summon to knowledge and practical action according to it, who, by their place and their teaching, allow the existence of the human being *qua* human being, and who, with regard to the perfection of the human soul by affecting it through teaching and guidance and bringing it to the degree of perfection and the abode of the intellects, tread the path of the angels who are entrusted with the world, who are actual with regard to the world, influencing its bodies and its natural powers in order to extract that which is supposed to exist in terms of animals and plants and minerals to bring it to existence and whose existence in the divine work is like their existence in the prophetic work and corresponding to it. Just as the elements and their powers, by themselves, have no power to extract their offspring except by things that act upon them, and not from things acting by themselves except by the elements and their powers which affect them. Similarly, the sciences of the law and its principles are not extracted except by the religious dignitaries entrusted with the spread of their sciences and the revelation of that which is hidden in it. It is not, however, true of the dignitaries that they can act upon the soul by itself, except by means of legal precedents and the law's stipulations and its sciences. This is evident by the necessity of balance and equivalence.

Then we resolved the law with its principles and its characteristics and the dignitaries [65] which have been undertaken to that from which the totality takes its existence, that it might be a trustworthy witness of that to which we resolved the world and the agents in it. We found them resolving themselves into two things, not into many, like the principles of the law, its sciences and its actions, but less than that. One of them is the scripture, with its inimitability. That is equivalent to, and in keeping with, that to which the world resolves itself, in all its basic elements and its celestial spheres and its stars—namely prime matter, which with its form is one thing. The other is the 'foundation', who is entrusted with the preservation of the scripture, from which the law comes. It is like the matter to the 'foundation'. He works in it and extracts its hidden knowledge and expounds it and confirms the religious law and assists it. That is equivalent to the angel who works in prime

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1. The phrase 'dignitaries of the religious hierarchy' points to the important Ismaili notion of the *ḥudūd al-dīn*, who were the variously ranked officials of the complex organization presided over by the Imam.

matter and form, from which comes the corporeal world and nature. We analyse the scripture and the 'foundation', resolving them to that from which they take their existence, and we find that their existence is from the speaking prophet, who is one thing. The entire realm of divine legislation culminates, thus, in one end, beyond which there is nothing of the same genus. That is equivalent to that to which prime matter and form resolve themselves, along with that which acts upon them, it being one thing by reason of the fact that the existents culminate in something beyond which there is nothing except that which is not of the same genus as the existents.

It cannot be that the existence of the 'foundation' and the scripture is from two things unless from one, since there is no mediator between the speaking prophet and the 'foundation' and the scripture which is the source of the religious law and its establishment. Just as it cannot be that prime matter and form and the agent in them resolve themselves into two things by the culmination of analysis in the first of the existents which, if it is not one, leads to an infinite regress, and the existence of that which leads to an infinite regress is impossible. We have found that learners in the realm of divine legislation cannot ascend to the degree of knowledge, and to reaching perfection, except through the existence of a teacher and a guide who has been established to teach them and to guide and raise them. That is equivalent to what we concluded about the necessity of the existence of someone upon whom a potential being depends for his emergence into actuality. Moreover, we found the dignitaries of religion, who undertake instruction and guidance, all of them, high and low, are incapable in and of themselves of extracting the sciences and grasping them, and are in need of someone who will make those sciences clear to them. This corresponds to what we have determined about the incapacity of the existents of the world, both those that act and those that are acted upon, to bring things to their perfection. We have also found whoever cannot extract the sciences on his own to be lacking in both his nature and his act. In his nature, by reason of his being [66] unable to undertake the judgment of the law or in his act by reason of his being not formed to religious and divine knowledge. That corresponds to what we have determined about the path of that which is acted upon and is in need of another for its own act, thus being deficient in its nature and its act, whether in its nature by reason of its being of two things (each distinct from the other), or else in its act, needing another in it.

We found that, with regard to someone who is deficient with regard to his nature and his act, there arises to him someone else, perfect in his nature and deficient in his act, like the 'foundation' who is complete in his nature by reason of being perfect, but is deficient in his act, by reason of his being in need, in it, of scripture and religious law in order to be able to work upon souls, and to summon to allegorical understanding and knowledge, corresponding to the 'worlds' in the prophetic work, confirming the external meaning that is connected with

practical action. That accords with what we determined with regard to the being of him who raises potential beings to actuality, who transcends the corporeal realm, complete and perfect in his nature, deficient in his act by virtue of his need, for the completion of his act, of receptacles which are on the level of matter, on which he acts.

We found the being of the 'foundation', as a 'foundation', dependent upon the speaking prophet, who is perfect in nature and in act, by whom is his existence and to whom is his return. That corresponds to what we determined about the existence of something prior to that which is complete in its nature and deficient in its act, which is that by which the potential emerges to actuality, complete in both nature and act together. It is the first of all existents, and the first end of the existents. We found the speaking prophet in the world of divine legislation a root, in which culminate all the dignitaries. There is nothing above him except that being who causes him to attain this high degree, he being complete in his nature by his attainment of perfection, complete in his act by reason of his being not in need of what he stipulates and makes plain, and what he brings from the clear scripture to another who is helped by it, except that by which is his support and his completeness from Him Who is above him. That corresponds to what we have determined about the existence of the First Existent as a root, in which everything that exists culminates, and that there is nothing above him except Him Who created him, may He be praised. He is complete in his nature and complete in his act.

From the speaking prophet's being a cause in which all religious things, whether potential or actual culminate, and the equivalence of the existents from him to the divine creation, arises the demonstration that the first thing is a cause in which all causes culminate, just as the speaking prophet becomes a first root from whom exist both the scripture and the 'foundation'. The first thing becomes a first root from which exist prime matter and the separate form, just as [67] the speaking prophet's being a speaking prophet is not because of who is of his genus among humankind. The first thing's existence is not from whoever is of its genus. Just as the speaking prophet comes into being from another by whom he exists, the first exists by virtue of another. That is the interpretation of the saying of God, 'The likeness of a good word is as a good tree' (14:24).

From what we have presented, the establishment of the existence of the First Existent has become clear, and that his existence is not by his own nature, and that he is an act and an agent and something acted upon in his nature, and an end in which all the existents culminate, and that he is not a body and not a power in a body, and that he transcends the corporeal world.

This [Figures 1 and 2] is a picture of these existents in their correspondences and equivalents that you may see with your own eyes. Blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds. There is no God but He, blessed be He, the Most High, and greatly

exalted above that which the wrongdoers say. I take refuge in God, and ask him for assistance, and commit all my affairs unto Him, for truly he watches over his servants.

**Figure 1: The Structure of the World of Unity**

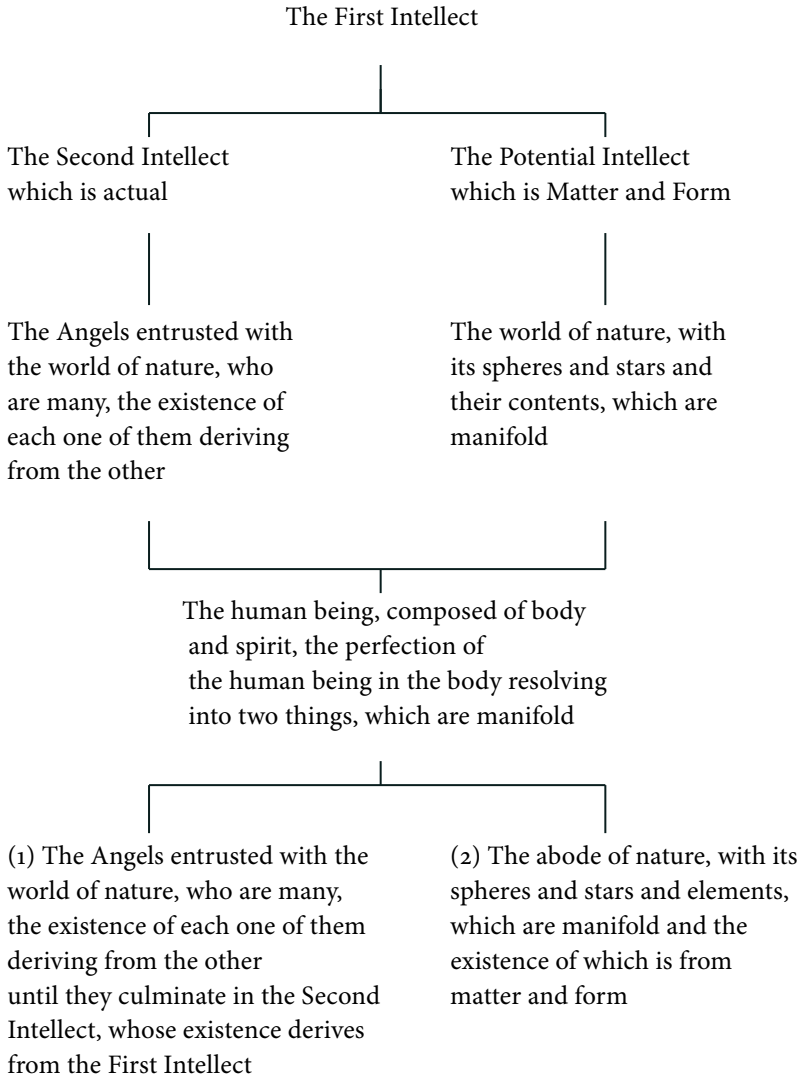
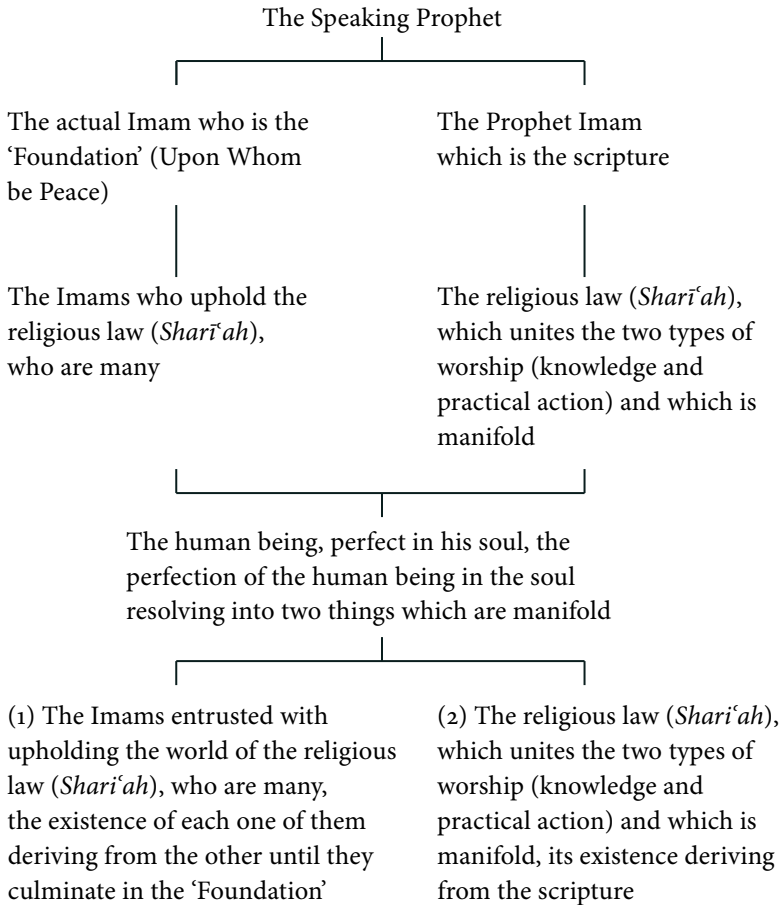


Figure 2: The Structure of the World of Religion



On his being the prime mover of all moving things, and in what way he moves them, and that he is the cause of the existence of all that is other than himself, and that he does not need anything other than his own nature in his act, and that he is intellect in his nature and a thinker of his nature and an object of thought by his nature (section 3:7, pp. 89–94).

We affirm that motion, since it is a kind of act, and since it is of the nature of acts that they do not exist except by reason of a principle, whether they are in matter or occur in their nature, has a principle from which its existence springs. Since motion is present in the world, it follows that motion has a principle, and since it is established that it has a principle, investigation discloses that this is divided into a principle which is both a mover and a first moved—like the life that emanates from

the world of unity and perfection, which is the world of intellect, into the world of body, which is termed nature. This is the mover of bodies according to what is appropriate to them, according to the divine economy. It is that which is moved by its own movement, because it is within the corporeal world. It is moved toward a principle which is a mover and a second moved, like the second perfection in the world of intellect, and perfection in the souls of those who corroborate, which is sometimes called prophecy and at other times is called apostleship, which is the mover of the souls of the human race toward deification, worship, desiring the best and happiness, by its summoning them to practical action. It is also the moved by its awakening a desire and its inspiring fear and its being among them. The movement of the two together is not from their nature but from another, an extraneous movement without purpose accompanying the mover with his intention to move what is other than himself, without the purpose of moving himself. As for the mover of bodies, by reason of his being among them when he moves them that he might obtain what had not been his to obtain of sanctification and glorification and happiness in continuation and everlastingness except by his moving of them. This is a moving which is like what happens to a sailor, who moves his boat, which he himself is in. Or it is like what happens to the soul, in terms of movement, when it moves the parts of its body in order to change location. As for the mover of souls, by his being of the human species when he begins the summons to deification and worship and instruction and inspiring desire and fear in order that he attain what had not been his to attain in terms of station, except by his summoning and his instruction and his deification his worship, then he is necessarily moved, even if it had not been his purpose to move his nature. And since the movement of the two of them is not from their nature, but rather [90] from another, their being set in motion cannot be except, for their need for their motion, which is their act of contact with something by which comes their motion by their natures.

For, if they do not need another for their movement (which is for a certain purpose) in which resides the purpose of their being moved, nor do they need to reach that purpose by their natures, then they are not in movement, just as the soul, if it were not in need, when seeking vengeance on another, of direct movement of the hand, which is other than itself, for striking, and the tongue for invective, and the person as he is for boldness, movement would not have been necessary in the first place. And since their movement would not occur except because of their need in action for another which functions, with regard to them, as that which receives their action (like relationship of the body to nature, or of learning souls to helping souls), so that it attains, by them together, perfection, and since, with regard to station, the deficient thing which lacks is beneath the perfect which has no need, this necessitates, from the perspective of divine organization, that there be in existence that which precedes the moved mover needing another in its act, such that it does not need in its action any other that would imply a lack in it. So

it possesses a perfection by which it can dispense with help in bringing action to existence by another; and the existence of such a being is necessary.

There is nothing that precedes the moved movers and has perfection, power, glory, abundance, splendour, radiance and lights, and that dispenses by its nature with need of another, other than the Creation, which is the first created being and the First Existent. It is the Creation, which is the first created being, and the First Existent, which is the prime mover, which does not move, and its movement of another is like the movement that a beloved brings out of its lover, or like the movement of the magnet stone moving iron toward it. The matter in this is that the first moved mover, which is one of the emanated things, is its limit and its second perfection, on which depends its undertaking sanctification and glorification and praise, and in which is its joy, its happiness, its continuation and its endurance in its thinking of what precedes itself in existence, the prime mover, which is the Creation and the First Existent. Its thinking of it is a form in its nature, undertaking for it by that the actualization of which is perfection in sanctification, glorification, praise and joy in what he has of perfection and continuation and joy. The form always is an agent in what is to it a form, moving it to what it has to be moved to, and this form, which is its mover, moves it to the doing of what its perfection necessitates, by which it attains to it, and necessitates sanctification and glorification and joy in continuation and eternal existence.

[91] Thus he does not find any alternative at his preparation to this action to using the body, in which he is, for his perfection in his existence is not by his nature, but by the two of them together. For this reason it is said, since the perfection of the body, which is the first perfection by what moves it, makes this a boundary to the soul, it is the perfection of a high natural body to a limit which it reaches, and when the body is used for an action the movement which is the most lasting of motions and the most perfect of them takes place. It becomes by that a mover of corporeal things and a moved thing by their motion, and by the continuation of its act is what perfection necessitates by way of sanctification, glorification, praise, joy, happiness and splendour, the extension of the movement to continuation and eternity.

Thus, the cause of the movement of the moved is this intelligible form from the creation, which is the First Existent. That form is the First Existent's perfection, and reception of the emanation which flows through all of the existents, giving them existence and continuation, demands it. By this form, the prime mover becomes a prime mover to all that is other than it, and the moved becomes a first moved by its nature. If we believe there to be motion in it, it is but the grasping of its nature by its nature, and its joy in its nature by reason of its sublimity and glory and its acknowledgement of incapacity to comprehend what comes into existence from it.

The way of this first moved mover is not the way of the intellects that emerge from it, which are free of receptive matter or of what is, to them, like an object; for that which emerges from the intellects whose natures are intellects, and thinkers,



and objects of thought, and the nature of the first moved mover is not altogether intellect, since there is in its nature that which is not intellect. This is the body, which is like matter to it, and like the object in which it works, and its intellect is thought not by its subject but rather by its form, the perfection of which consists in the thinking of that which emerges from it. Then that it is a cause for the existence of what is other than itself, meaning that the existents are the caused effects of their causes, and their causes are prior to them in rank, in terms of existence, and they are the limits to them. There is nothing among the existents which is the limit of all limit and prior to every prior, except the creation, which is the first created thing and the First Existent, and it is thus the cause of the existence of everything other than itself. Since the creation, which is the created thing that precedes everything, is in everything, if it were not, the cause for the existence of everything other than itself, there would be no existence of existent things. But since the existents do, in fact, exist, it is necessary that there be that in which the existents culminate, which, if you go beyond it searching for something else behind it, you go beyond to that which has the existence of a cause on which depends the existence of the totality. There is not that in which the existents culminate, nor a thing behind it, except the creation, which is the created thing, and the first created thing is the cause of the existence [92] of the existents in the same manner as the number one is the first of the numbers.

There follows the impossibility of a thing's being the cause of the existence of another thing, which does not occur except by reason of an obstacle which hinders its causation, either an obstacle in its own nature or an obstacle external to its nature and different from it. And since there is no obstacle to the first created being which prevents its acting with the totality of its power—neither externally, from a thing which precedes it, nor from its own nature, in terms of a matter which hinders it—the first created thing, which is the creation, is the cause of the existence of the existents. Furthermore, the existence of a thing from another thing does not come about except by the first thing's being in the utmost of perfection and the extreme of completeness, excellent in its nature, having richness and power and possessing the generous offers of its nature that allow the existence of things from it—like the knowledgeable man, possessing the sciences, who helps the student. If he were not knowledgeable, it would be impossible for a knowledgeable person to arise from contact with him. Or it is like the jar which, when it is filled with water, is able to overflow. But if the jar contained only a small amount of water, it would stand in need of water from another jar, and would be unable, on its own, to overflow. But since the creation, which is the first created thing, is at the peak of perfection and the extreme of completeness and richness and excellence, it is the cause of the existence of that which is other than it.

Now, since the first created thing is the first living thing, and since it would not be living if it did not act, the first created thing is necessarily an agent. And since

it is an agent, and the agent is the cause of the existence of its effect, it follows that the first created being is cause to the existence of that which is other than itself. Thus, it is the prime mover and the first cause.

Furthermore, since it does not need others for the production of its actions, owing to its perfection, for its action is upon its own nature, and its nature is the matter for its nature, upon which it works, and its nature is the form for its nature, by which it works. That which has an existence of this kind does not need another for its act, and thus it is not permitted that that which comes into existence from Him need an other in its act, for it is not permitted that there be two distinct things coming into existence except from two things necessitating their existence. What combines two things is composite, and whatever is composite is preceded in the order of existence and has something that is prior to it. Since God, be He praised, is exalted above being composite, and above an attribute being attached to Him, it is impossible that two distinct things take their existence directly from Him. And since it is impossible that two distinct things take their existence directly from Him, it must be that that which comes into existence from Him is one. And since it is one, and an agent not needing any other for [93] its act, the first created being, by virtue of its being first in existence and cause of the existence of that which is other than itself, does not need any other for its act.

For this reason, we affirm that [human] souls, when they need the help of the senses, which are distinct from them, for their act, are like the souls of animals, which do not survive death. And every soul rises in action to the highest degree, preserving it, and in knowledge to the summit of the existents, and it comprehends them in what diffuses in its nature from the light of unity, arising with that which is other than itself, needing the senses in its actions. The light of unity demands it and maintains close connection with it and helps it, after it had been the one demanding the light and being the connection to it. Thereupon, the first created being is intellect, and thinker, and object of thought. Thus, its being intellect is by virtue of its being the pure intellect, coming into existence directly from God Most High, and its being a thinker comes by virtue of its act in its own nature, and its comprehension of it, which is its thinking of it. It does not need, in its thinking of its nature, which is its act, any other, as we need it in our comprehension of our own natures, in terms of knowledge and thinking, things other than ourselves which help us. But, rather, the nature of that intellect is that it thinks its own nature. And its being an object of thought comes by virtue of its nature being intelligible to it, and it does not need a thing other than itself in order to be an object of intellection. Rather, its nature is intelligible by nature. The thinker is the object of thought, and the object of thought is the thinker. It is one nature, like the situation of the intellects in nature, at their comprehension of their essence and their knowledge of their nature, that it is a living essence grasping the forms which precede it in existence. That which comprehends its essence and knows its nature to be a living essence is

nothing other than it. Indeed, it is the comprehender and the knower of its nature, and that which is comprehended by it and known by it is nothing other than itself, but is it itself. It is that which knows its nature and is known by reason of its nature, and the known is the knower, and the knower is the known. It is one nature.

Thereupon, the intellects in nature rather think those intellects which transcend them, by reason of their being like them, such that they are intellect by their ascent to the realm of perfection and the existents which have perfection, and they are thinker by its thinking of its nature, and they are the object of thought by its nature's being an object of thought by reason of its intellect, which is the thinker. Thus the first created being does not need for its act that which plays the role played by matter for agents. For, if its act could not be brought to completion except in some receptive matter, it would not deserve to be first in existence. Instead, it would be necessary that something precede it, something which caused that from which it took its existence. And since the Most High is exalted and glorified beyond His being something that can have something prior to it, it is necessary that that which exists from Him be exalted above being [94] associated with something else. So, if there is not anything else with it, and if it is cause to all else, it does not need anything other than itself. God Most High made this clear when He said, 'O ye people, reverence your Lord who created you from one soul, and created from it its partner.'<sup>1</sup>

He makes clear in what He created in terms of horizons and souls, which are the balance scales of religion and the measure by which the realities of things are known in their balance and their congruence, and He indicates this, may He be praised, in His saying 'We shall show them our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.'<sup>2</sup>

This testifies of the speaking prophet's being first among the dignitaries in his age, and a preacher to all of what moves them to worship of their Lord, and a worker in their souls of the forms of unity, by reason of the first being a mover to all moved things to what will cause them to praise their maker, and from the perfection which pertains to the speaking prophet being in his fulfilment to the end, which draws by its perfect actions and its polished utterances the people to its summoning. He is the cause of the multitude's following him, and their obedience to him and their separation from relatives in allegiance to the love they have for him. For, the existence of the perfection which is in the first in its most extreme form is the cause which moves others. That occurs in the manner in which the beloved moves the lover. From the speaking prophet's being comes the cause for the existence of all the existents in the realm of religion in his age, of which he is the first, and the principle of its wealth and its ordinances and its dignitaries. The first being the cause of the existence of what is other than itself, and from the speaking prophet's being comes his perfection in laying down laws of worship and establishing the rules of unity

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1. Qur'ān 4:1.

2. Qur'ān 41:53.

which are the source of happiness, from any helper, i.e. the First does not need another than himself in his act. And from the speaking prophet's being an intellect in his nature, and a thinker in his nature, and a thinker of his nature by reason of his nature, and intelligible in his nature by reason of his nature.

If he has finally reached perfection, that the first is like that—intellect, thinker, and object of thought—then let Him be praised, Who is exalted above the imagination and the thought, for He is veiled by the splendour of His creation from being comprehended by an attribute. There is no god but He, and there is no change and no power except by the aid of God, the Exalted and the Great.

I take refuge in God and seek His help, and I commit all my affairs unto His care, for He is watchful over His servants. God is sufficient for us, best of guardians, best of masters, best of helpers.

### **On the Manner of Emanation**

[97] We said in what preceded that each of the existents, since they are many, is distinguished by a name appropriate to it and indicative of it. The first intellect, which is the first created being, was created from nothing, and is distinguished by the name of 'Creation', by reason of its being of the essence of an act proceeding to existence from the Exalted One, praised be He, not from a thing playing the role of matter among the essences of the existents. We made it clear that a knowledge of the manner of the creation is veiled, and that the intellects despair of a way to lift that veil and to attain to such knowledge, this is because He is such that He is not grasped by their essences and because, when seeking to grasp Him, they need to emerge from being intellects.

But in the emergence of the intellect from its being an intellect is the negation of its essence, and the indication that the manner of creation is not like the manner of emanation, which luminous intellects have grasped and of which they have given account. For, if it were like them, creation would be emanation, and emanation would be creation. So the notion that creation is to be grasped in the same way that emanation may be grasped is refuted, according to what we have made clear in what has preceded.

Emanation is an effect that does not proceed from primary intention, and it is an existence from which emanates an essence that combines two things: by one of them it grasps or comprehends, and by the other it is grasped or comprehended. Thus, this essence—at its perception of its nature and its joy in it—radiates. Accordingly, there emanates from the midst of the two things emerging from it something that is established with the very establishment of the essence. This means is that the creation, which is the first created thing, since it is living by its essence, and powerful by its essence, knowing by its essence, perfect, eternal, an intellect, an intelligizer, and much more, according to what we have explained

in the foregoing, by reason of its being at the summit of the virtues. Its essence comprehends its nature by means of its power, by virtue of its power, and perceives and thinks it. Furthermore, its essence, which is that of an intellect, becomes an intelligizer of itself, and its self or essence, in turn, is an object of intellection for its essence as an intellect. No obstacle hinders it, neither an external one nor one in its essence, from what its perfect power necessitates. And it sees what it loves of its essence—for instance, that it is first in existence, that nothing precedes it, that it is a cause on which depends the existence of the existents, and that it is the ultimate in brilliance, light, luminosity, glory, exaltedness, greatness, pride, immensity, power and splendour, and that it is pure act that emanates into existence without an intermediary in existence between it and the Exalted One [98], may He be praised. It rejoices in its essence, in its state at that glance, with a rejoicing that exceeds all rejoicing, and it is delighted with a delight that has no analogy to the existents in ourselves, because of their deficiency in perceiving the desired and attaining to the beloved. For it is greater and mightier.

From that pleasure at the radiation of its essence—at its comprehension of its essence and its intelligizing of it and its glance at it in its essence, rejoicing in it—there occurs, from it, a radiance of light. It is like what happens to the blood when happiness arises in the soul upon the meeting of its sweetheart, viewing its beloved. The interior colour red permeates to the exterior of the body, to the cheeks, and appears in the skin of the face. However, owing to the existence of obstacles appearing in its nature and to its incapacity, this redness does not go further and does not penetrate the extremities of the body beyond its appearance in the skin of the face. And what emerges from that light at its radiating—since the essence that radiates from it is free of obstacles and owing to the completeness of its power—arises outside it, established, and standing stable in accordance with its cause. The situation resembles what comes from the sun when it shines upon the face of the water, or upon the surface of a polished mirror. It is an emanation of light emerging from it and standing by its own essence. And its existence is by the existence of the sun and its shining, such that if we were to assume the sun to be eternally established in the sky, shining upon a mirror or upon the surface of water remaining eternally, the light emanating from them would be an eternal existent. For, with regard to the illumination which is appropriate to it, the essence of the Creation (which is the First Intellect) is not like the sun, but greater, and the purity of its essence is not like the surface of the water or a mirror, but more clear, and the beauty and splendour of its nature is more glorious and splendid than any beauty and any splendour. So the glance of the first created being, which is the First Intellect, at its nature, and its intelligizing of it, and its comprehension of it, is like the sun's contemplation of the surface of a mirror and its illumination of it, and the essence's being intelligible and illuminated is like the mirror that is illuminated by the light of the sun, and the existence of the emanation emerging from the First Intellect is like the existence of

the light emerging from the mirror by its reflecting the light of the sun that shines upon its exterior. The fact that the intellect and the object of intellection are one nature and one thing is like the fact that the sun and the mirror, from the corporeal perspective, are one nature and one thing. Furthermore, the essence of the First Intellect, by reason of its being both an intelligizer and an intellect, is nobler than they are by being only intelligible or objects of intellection.

[99] And if the nature of the First Intellect, because it is a single creation, is like the being of the sun—i.e., better than the illuminated mirror and nobler than it—and if the two are, from the perspective of their two bodily natures one thing, so the emanation as a shining of light from the nature of the Creation, which is the First Intellect, is established, according to what we have mentioned.

There may emanate from the intellects that are in the realm of nature and that emerge to actuality and attain their second perfection with the passage of time what goes as follows: That is to say that the souls of the speaking prophets, may the blessings of God be upon them, which have become pure intellects, nonetheless continue at the beginning to seek knowledge of what is external to them by means of the senses, which serve as their instruments. They acquire it until, by means of that which shines upon them from the realm of sanctity, they are able to dispense with sensory props. The soul, after having been served by the senses which imparted knowledge to it, becomes a servant to them by reason of its power and its connection with the sources of illumination and light, and by its looking to what it conceives as its essence, in that it shows it its power and its capacity, and it leads what it realizes in its essence. The powers of the soul increase in their conceptualization of what is external to them, and they make the common power, which is the imaginative power, which had received from the senses the forms of the perceptibles. It pays its service to it; it is the thing most close to it, formed in its shape.

The imaginative faculty extends itself by increasing the power of the thinking essence, just as it used to receive the forms from outside and lead them to it so that the air was formed from the imaginative power. So there arises for the senses an image which it sees, and this image is an emanation from the soul which has risen to the degree of the intellects and attained its second perfection. Its existence is the opposite of what exists in the essence of the forms by way of the senses.

This seeking for the interior functions as a forming of the soul, and the emanation from the interior to the exterior is a realization of the sense from the intellects of the speaking prophets, upon them be peace. It is like what we do when we seek certainty of the limit or definition of something, comprehending its reality from reversing the definition of which—whenever it is reversed and its meaning established—the knowledge that it is what we wanted becomes valid. An example is our saying, ‘Physical objects are long and wide and deep’, and our reversal of this, seeking for certainty and knowledge in its reality, by our saying, ‘Everything that has depth and width

and length is a physical object'. When the first meaning is established at the reversal, and when nothing has been nullified from it, we attain certainty and knowledge of its reality, that it is its limit or definition and its essence.

Or it is like our saying, 'Man is living, articulate, a second emanation', coupled with our reversal [100] of this statement, seeking certainty and knowledge in its reality, by our saying, 'Every second emanation that is articulate and living is a man'. When the first meaning is established and when nothing is nullified from it at its reversal, certainty is established, as well as the knowledge of its reality and that it is its limit, or definition, and its essence. That means that whatever does not have its definition reversed by attachment of the word 'all' to it—and the meaning of the desired differs in its reality—does not correspond and does not take a definition. An instance of this occurs in our statement, 'Every human being is an animal', and our reversal of this statement upon seeking and contemplation, that that is a definition to it, by which it is distinguished and which points to its nature, by our saying, 'Every animal is a human being', the meaning of which does not correspond to what the first statement mandates by reason of the fact that it introduces into humanity something that does not pertain to a human being. So its falsehood is known, and it is not taken as a definition, but is discarded.

Similarly, the speaking prophets, may peace be upon them, do not comprehend God by knowledge, and there shines out in their holy souls His form, from the world of unity, and they seek Him by the matter which is outstretched toward them from the lights of knowledge from illuminations of the divine realm. And it is reversed from interior to exterior—I mean to say, from the nature of the soul—and is conveyed to the sense which is external to them, and it is represented to them. This is the certain truth, in which there is no doubt.

What is not reversed and does not arise in the senses,—even if they have trust in it—they do not make an unequivocal judgment about it, and they await what will come to be from the divine power of emanation in their natures, for it is not represented to them except by reason of an increase of that power, and that enters into the question of revelation. We will speak at length on that subject in its place, by the power of God and the blessing of his saint which has been emanated upon us.

The exalted religious dignitaries, by way of creation, and it is the first emanation, combine all the perfections, not in time, and it is the ultimate of degrees of intellects in their perfection.

By this the human being that emerges from potentiality to actuality in the realm of nature is separated from the human being who is the angel brought near, whose existence is by way of the first emanation in the realm of Creation.

Praise be to God, who guides us. We would not be guided were it not for God's guidance along with his saint (may God's blessings be upon him). I appeal for pardon to God, and I ask Him for help, and I commit my affairs to Him, for He truly watches over His servants.

## THE BRILLIANT EPISTLE

*al-Risālat al-durriyyah*

Translated for this volume by Faquir Muhammad Hunzai from *al-Risālat al-durriyyah fī ma'na al-tawhīd*, ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1952), and the reading of ms. Tübingen DC 1258.<sup>1</sup>

**On the Meaning of *Tawhīd* (Unification), *Muwahhīd* (The Unifier) and *Muwahhād* (The Unified)**

*In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful*

Praise be to Allah, Who is too mighty to have an equal and too sublime to be described by speech in any way. The intellects are perplexed about Him, therefore they barely begin to search for a path to attain something to name Him therewith, but the incapability of reaching Him surrounds them. And the insights (*albāb*) are baffled (about Him), therefore they barely think of something, intending to make it an attribute of Him, but the ignorance of how to judge Him with it seizes them.

I praise Him with the praise of the one who affirms only that which is comprehended of itself by His essence. And there is none among His originated things that is a deity, and there is none among His originated creatures but a supplicant to Him through glorification. And I truly bear witness according to my creation, and thereby I hope to attain salvation and success when there will be no longer time to escape, that divinity is not among the things that can be comprehended by an intellect or a soul, nor is it among those that can be judged by an imagination or a sense, except that while affirming Him they are compelled to say that He is Allah, other than Whom there is no deity. Nor is there anyone worthy of worship (*ma'būd*) other than Him.

And I bear witness that Muḥammad, the one crowned with the lights of *ta'yīd* (divine help) and holiness and honoured with the leadership of (all of) mankind, the former and the latter, His servant and messenger, invited to the principles of faith (*aḥkām al-īmān*) and to the attainment of mercy in the neighbourhood of God, through a law (*sharī'a*) that he spread and introduced, and practices (*sunan*) that he established and laid down, and obedience that he urged as beneficial and disobedience that he abstained from and prohibited, and pillars of truth that he raised high, and motives of falsehood that he eradicated as something repelled, and a trust that he conveyed yet prevented its assumption. May God bless him with ever-increasing and pure (*zākiya*) blessing so long as a night becomes dark and a morning shines. And may the peace (of God) continue eternally and multiply sempiternally upon the one who is (divinely) helped (*mu'ayyad*) with the comprehensive lights and is rich

<sup>1</sup> The translation has been revised for this edition.



with the blessed and reverent imams from his progeny, his legatee, inheritor of his knowledge, his successor and protector of his authority, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb, the guardian of the religion and its crown and the custodian of the straight path and its course. And may the best of blessings and salutations of God be upon the pure imams, the forefathers of Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, the Commander of the Faithful, and upon him and those who are waiting to come till the Day of Resurrection.

Now then, when the trial pervaded the people of the guiding mission (*al-da'wah al-hādīyah*), may God spread its lights, due to the withholding by the sky of the rain, and perplexity seized them due to the stopping by the earth of the nurturing of the seeds, and distress surrounded them due to the domination of the famine, and the causes of insanity alternated among them, and the teeth of test bit them, and the vicissitudes of time snubbed them, the wisest of them was flabbergasted and the most clement of them was dismayed. Their hope and expectation diminished. They gave up all hopes and thought that they were doomed to perdition. Then by the favour of the friend (*bi-naẓar walī*) of God [i.e., the Imam] and the son of His Prophet... His succour came to them as a mercy. He illuminated for them what was dark and elucidated what was obscure. And that was his chosen, ... the one who was the most truthful in speaking, the most trustworthy in executing the duty, the most steadfast in the religion, the most firm in obedience and the most long-standing in migrating among them, namely Khattigīn al-Ḍayf,<sup>1</sup> may God guard him in the best obedience. He appointed him as the gate (*bāb*) of his mercy and the chief *dā'ī* (*dā'ī al-du'āt*) with the title of *al-ṣādiq al-ma'mūn* (the truthful and trustworthy), so that he may reunite them and preserve the order.

On this renewal of the gift for them, they rejoiced. For (his) favour for them became greater by his gift (*minḥa*). And (for this) they thanked God, may He be exalted, and His friend on the earth, may peace be upon him. They used to attend his circle (*majlis*) and converse with one another. Some of the people of *da'wa* (mission), may God protect its lights, put some questions to make them a means of testing and a way of spreading discord. I thought it appropriate to answer each of the questions according to what has been extended from the blessings of the friends of God on the earth ... and devote a separate epistle to what I am going to write, so that thereby the pillars of intimacy, by confidential conversation between me and my brethren, may become strong and the soul may be prepared with training to encounter the antagonists and the hypocrites. Thus I decided and wrote this epistle answering the first of the questions and named it *al-Risāla al-durriyyah* (The Brilliant Epistle). For it is a light in its meanings and a pearl in its contents. The rest of them will follow it. I ask God for help to complete them, by His strength and power.

The actual question: A questioner asked and said, 'What is *tawḥīd*?' It is known in our saying that it means 'making *muwaḥḥad* (unified, one) (*fi'l al-muwaḥḥad*)'

1 Chief *dā'ī* under the Imam-Caliph al-Ḥākim (d. 411/1021).

and the *muwaḥḥad* is the object of the *muwaḥḥids*. But it is not permissible for us to say that God is the object of the *muwaḥḥids*. Further, he said that *tawḥīd* is not possible without the imagination of a multiplicity; it is applicable only to what is made *wāḥid* (one) of the entire multiplicity. But in the divinity there is no multiplicity to make *wāḥid* out of it. Explain this for us.

First we say that the *Mubdi*‘ (Originator) ... having no similitude, does not depend on the unification of the unifiers (*tawḥīd al-muwaḥḥidīn*), nor on the purification of the purifiers (*tajrīd al-mujarridīn*), so that He would leave His having no similitude if the unifiers do not unify Him, or that He would leave His transcendence (*min ‘uluwwihi*) from the characteristics of His originated things if the purifiers do not purify Him. But He ... has no similitude whether the unifiers unify Him or not, whether the purifiers purify Him or not.

And it is the element (*‘unṣur*) and nature of speech that, when someone intends to inform about the traces and essences that transcend the comprehension of the senses, its meanings become too narrow and too subtle (to convey them), let alone that which (even) the propositions of the intelligence and the soul cannot comprehend. Thus, speech is unable to denote that which is not like it. Thus, there is nothing in that which is composed of letters, such as a word or speech, which can denote the reality sought in *tawḥīd*. For what is intended to be comprehended about the *Mubdi*‘ ... through a description, is far beyond the noblest meanings that the composed letters can convey.

Since this is the case and it is inevitable to speak and affirm what the rudiments of the intellect necessitate, namely, an agent from whom the existing actions came forth, nor is it possible to dispense with the expression of the subtleties of the imaginary thoughts that flash in the mind, and (since) the simple letters to which recourse is taken in expression and whence the speech and demonstration come forth, due to their limitation in bearing the subtle meanings, are unable to convey what is not from their element and incapable of informing about what is not from their substance, the speaker is compelled to speak with the most noble, most sublime and most subtle meanings that the letters can convey from their cognation (*sunkh*) and origin. When there is compulsion (to speak), then there is no more noble and more subtle meaning in the speech than *wāḥidiyya* (being one) and no more exalted than the meaning of our saying ‘*fard*’ (single), owing to the fact that, to that which has no similitude, *fard* may be applied more appropriately, from among that which is composed of letters, to Him than *Mubdi*‘ even if it does not befit Him. Since the name referring to His being *Mubdi*‘ is due to Him (only) by virtue of His *ibdā*‘ (origination) and He was there while there was no *ibdā*‘, and He is not He without being *fard*. But He is *fard* forever. And He, as such, is *fard* due to the impossibility of the existence of His similitude.

Again, when the field of thinking is extended in attaining the most appropriate of the meanings which the composite letters convey to be said about the *Mubdi*‘ in bewilderment and compulsion, it is the *fard* which can be applied to Him

— even though the meaning (of *fard*) is applicable to some of His originated things (*mukhtara'āt*), the field of thinking remaining confined to what the intellect comprehends through its light and to that which its propositions may comprehend of what is beyond it [i.e., the field of the intellect], namely, the meaning conveyed by our saying '*fard*.' For the meaning of *fardiyya* (being single) in *wāḥidiyya* (being one) exceeds the meaning of *wāḥid* (one), *aḥad* (unique) and *waḥīd* (alone) in *wāḥidiyya* by virtue of its being *ṣamad* [one to whom people resort in their needs, that which has no emptiness, i.e., is self-sufficient]. And the meaning of *fard* in *wāḥidiyya* is not, upon careful examination, to be distinguished from the meaning of *wāḥid* by virtue of its having an additional meaning in *wāḥidiyya*, except by virtue of its being the cause of *wāḥid*. And that which is the cause always precedes the effect, about which we have spoken in our book known as *Rāḥat al-'aql* (*Repose of the Intellect*), with which the darkness of ignorance disappears and through which the light of justice speaks. We have written it as a preface and have extended the field of definition so that it may be helpful for what we want to speak about.

*Tawḥīd* does not mean — as we have said about the meaning of *fard*, the careful examination of the meaning in communicating about God — that He is *fard*, so that the one who carefully examines (the meaning) may be a *muwaḥḥid*. Nor is it the case that God is restricted to one particular meaning so that by virtue of that meaning, it may be established that He is *fard*. For the glory of His grandeur is in a veil making it impossible for the letters to render it by any means. And how can it be possible for the letters to render it while they barely erect in their composition a lighthouse to guide, whereas the water of His power overflows and they barely announce any information to speak with a meaning, small or great, but the incapability (of that) establishes itself and spreads? God, the Existentiator, the Worthy of worship, thus, transcends the rational propositions and the physical qualifications.

*Tawḥīd*, indeed, is an infinitive on the (grammatical) measure of *tafīl*. The philologists do not use this kind of quadrilateral verb-forms except for the one whose action is abundant. For instance, if someone massacres, it is said: '*qattala fulānun yuqattilu taqtīlan fa-huwa muqattil*.' The one who kills only once is called *qātil*, but the one who massacres many times, *qattāl*. *Tawḥīd*, with respect to its meaning, has two aspects: One is related to the *ibdā'* of the *Mubdi'*... and the other to the act of the *mu'min* (believer) who is a *muwaḥḥid* (unifier). With respect to the aspect related to the *ibdā'* of the *Mubdi'*, *tawḥīd* necessitates a *muwaḥḥid* who is the agent of *wāḥid* (*al-fā'il li'l-wāḥid*) and a *muwaḥḥad* (unified), which is the object (of the *muwaḥḥid*) in the sense of *wāḥid* (one). And *wāḥid* is used in many ways, such as:

1. A *wāḥid* is *wāḥid* by virtue of the finiteness of its essence (*dhāt*) toward the sides by which it separates itself from others, such as the bodies of sensible things. In this respect, it deserves to be called *wāḥid*. And its limitation toward the sides and the comprehension of its limits, all this shows that this *wāḥid* is contingent.

2. A *wāḥid* is *wāḥid* in the sense that it is given a specific meaning that is not found in others, such as the property of the magnet in attracting iron. In this respect, it deserves to be called *wāḥid*. And its specification with this meaning, with the exclusion of the others, necessitates it to be contingent.
3. A *wāḥid* is *wāḥid* in the sense of essence (*‘ayn*), such as the essence of whiteness, the essence of blackness, the essence of a substance and the essence of a thing. In this respect, all of them deserve to be called *wāḥid*. And the fact that this *wāḥid*, in its existence, depends on the existence of someone other than who precedes it, and that its existence does not detach itself from its essence, being always with it, as long as it has an essence within existence, necessitates its being contingent.
4. And the *wāḥid* is *wāḥid* in an absolute sense. The absolute *wāḥid* betrays its essential ‘pairedness (*izdiwāj*),’ which consists of the *waḥdah* (oneness, unity) and its receptacle.

All these aspects (of *wāḥid*) necessitate that *wāḥid* be absolutely contingent. When it is established that *wāḥid* is absolutely necessarily contingent, then it necessitates that *tawḥīd*, which means ‘making one (*fi’l al-wāḥid*)’, which latter pronounces the contingency of its (own) essence, does not befit the glory of the *Mubdi’* ... Thus the *Mubdi’*, may He be sanctified, is *muwaḥḥid* in the sense that He is the *Mubdi’* of *wāḥid* and *aḥad*.

As to (the aspect of) *tawḥīd* related to the *mu’min* who is a *muwaḥḥid*, it does not mean that he ‘makes one (*yaf’alu al-wāḥid*)’; rather, it changes from its previous meaning that is ‘making one (*fi’l al-wāḥid*)’ to another one. As when the particle ‘*an*’ is used with the verb ‘*raghiba*,’ its meaning changes (from the previous one). For instance, when it is said, ‘*raghiba fulānun ‘an al-shay*,’ it means ‘so-and-so disliked the thing,’ but the ‘*raghiba*’ alone means contrary to it [i.e., to like]. Thus, the meaning of *tawḥīd* of the *muwaḥḥid* (in the case of the *mu’min*) is to divest the *muwaḥḥad* from a certain meaning. As in the sense of isolating (*tajrīd*) or separating (*ifrād*) a thing from another thing, it is said, ‘*waḥḥadtu al-shay’a ‘an al-shay*’ (I isolated a thing from another thing).’

When *tawḥīd* (in this case) means divesting the *muwaḥḥad* from a certain meaning, as we mentioned, and divinity is a necessity whose existence cannot be repudiated, and the fact of the agency (*fā’iliyya*) is a power that cannot be negated; and from among the things falling under existentionation, from the Originated Intellect (*al-‘aql al-ibdā’ī*) to the Emanated Intellect (*al-‘aql al-inbi‘āthī*), there is that which possesses the highest degree of knowledge, beauty, power, light, might, grandeur, nobility and sublimity, such as the Intellect, the Precursor (*sābiq*) in existence; and there is that which is below it in rank, such as the Successor (*tālī*) in existence, and so on till what is below them from the world of nature, and what it contains till the human intellect at the end – it is not impossible for an ignorant to think that the divinity lies in some of them. Each of these things (under existentionation) because of

the subsistence of the traces (of creaturehood) in it, bears witness against itself that it is not God; then from that proposition it follows that the *tawhīd*, which means to divest the *muwaḥḥid* (unified) – which because of the subsistence of the traces in it bears witness against itself that it is not God – from divinity, and to negate it from it and to isolate it from it and sustainership (*rubūbiyya*) and what is related to it, is the act of the *mu'min* who is a *muwaḥḥid*, so that by that *tawhīd* it may be established that the divinity belongs to someone else. As it is known from the things that fall under existence, there are things that have no intermediaries opposite to those that have intermediaries, such as blackness and whiteness that have intermediaries, such as redness, yellowness and so on. The things that have no intermediaries, they as such, have two sides, two states and two aspects. That is to say, when one of the two sides is negated by that negation, the other side is established, such as eternal and contingent. They do not have intermediaries between them; when eternity is negated from a thing, contingency becomes inseparable from it. And like substance and accident that have no intermediaries between them; when the characteristic of substance (*jawhariyya*) is negated from a thing, the characteristic of accident (*simat al-araḍ*) becomes inseparable from it. Then it is not imaginable that there is an intermediary between the Lord (*rabb*) and the vassal (*marbūb*), or between the *Mubdi'* (Originator) and the *mubda'* (originated), as we have explained the meaning of our sayings, 'the *mubda'* is the essence of the *ibdā'*,' in the book *Rāḥat al-'aql*.<sup>1</sup> Then the *mu'min* is a *muwaḥḥid* (unifier) in the sense that he divests the *muwaḥḥid* (unified), who is the *mubda'*, from divinity, as he finds the trace of *ibdā'* and the subjects and predicates in itself. Thus, the Prophet ... said: 'Al-mu'min muwaḥḥid wa-Allāh muwaḥḥid (The believer is a *muwaḥḥid* and God also is a *muwaḥḥid*).'

Again, the meaning of the multiplicity that is necessitated by our saying that 'tawhīd stands in two aspects' is: either with respect to the *fard* (Single), may He be exalted ... that is the *ibdā'* of multiplicity, that is multiple singles (*afrād*) and units (*āḥād*), or with respect to the *mu'min*, who is divesting all these numbers and singles from the divinity, one by one.

And then, first we will tersely show the truth contained in our saying that 'the *fard* is the cause of *wāḥid*,' according to the capacity of the epistle, even though we have explained it in our books. We say that the existence of all those things that are the essence of the first effect (*al-ma'lūl al-awwal*) is from the essence of the cause, which is the effect, and the effect is the cause (*hiya huwa wa-huwa hiya*) by virtue of the effect in its existence being from the element of the cause. And it is the nature of the effect that nothing is granted to and nothing exists in it except what its cause itself has poured forth over it, for what exists in the effect exists in the cause out of which the effect came into existence. For if the existence of what exists in the effect were not in the cause, it would have been impossible to grant the

1 Hamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-'aql*, ed. M. Kāmil Ḥusayn and M. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī (Leiden, 1953), pp. 73–75.

effect that did not exist in its cause. For instance, fire that is the cause of heating in what adjoins it: had the heat not been existing and subsisting in the essence of the fire, it would not have been found in what adjoins it. And how can a thing grant a thing from itself while the field of its element is empty of it? Or how can it bestow a thing while the bones of its existence are worn out?

When this is the case, we thought to investigate whether the *fard*, which is the cause of numbers, can from its essence indicate the ranks of countable things or not. We found it by virtue of what is hidden in it, such as the letters, their conjunction, their disjunction, their signs, their kinds, their multiplication, their calculation, that it comprises and indicates the entire ranks which God has originated. And the ranks in arithmetic are twelve, even though in form they are nine, vis-à-vis existents. This is the form of twelve ranks hidden in the *fard*....

And corresponding to those kinds are the letters of '*lā ilāha illa'llāh* (There is no deity but God),' which show the *ḥudūd* (ranks), over whom the light of Oneness pours forth, and upon whom are based the heavens and the earth and what they contain....

The brilliant proof of what we have said in this regard is the existence of the seven letters vis-à-vis the lords of the cycles, through whom and through what is poured forth over the souls from them, the purpose of the spiritual form that is created in their cycles becomes complete. If you calculate the numerical values (of the letters) according to the calculation of the *jummal*, they stand vis-à-vis the days of the sun in one revolution, which are three hundred sixty-five days; the result of the multiplication of the rank four into rank seven stands vis-à-vis the mansions of the moon in one revolution, which are twenty-eight mansions; the result of the values of the letters of the fourth rank according to the calculation of the *jummal* stands vis-à-vis the numbers of the lords of *ta'yīd* (divine help) from the *ḥudūd* (ranks) of every cycle, except the supreme of them which is one, stands vis-à-vis the Names of God ... which he who counts them enters paradise, and which are ninety-nine names.<sup>1</sup>

Had we not chosen brevity and decided that prolixity does not befit the epistles, we would have similarly expounded these ranks and numbers with which the abundance of the oceans of the friends of God, may peace be upon them, in sciences and the subtlety of the deduction of their followers from them, specifically and generally, would have been conceived. But this we have left so that the one who thinks about it may have happiness in every moment, and the one who reflects on it may renew for him a good deed in every instant from what shines to him from the wonders of wisdom.

Thus, it is evident that in the *fard*, by virtue of its being the cause of the *wāḥid*, are contained the ranks of all the countable [lit., that which fall under the number] existents, and that *tawḥīd* with respect to God is the *ibdā'* of the

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1. See T. Fahd, 'Ḥurūf, 'Ilm al-', *El2*, vol. 3, p. 595.

*wāḥid* and units (*āḥād*), and with respect to the *mu'min* is to divest the divinity from the units.

We say that the community, due to its deviation from the lords of guidance [i.e., the imams] and due to relinquishing the injunctions of obedience, does not reach (even) the remotest end of the ways of *tawḥīd*, except a few who follow the friends of God, the Exalted, on His earth, may peace be upon them. Therefore, the One Whom they worship with their descriptions of and belief in Him, is not searched for except (in) the one who exists and falls under origination (*ikhtirā'*), and His Essence is comprehended by the power of *ibdā'*. When the One Whom they worship is originated and over-powered, then their *tawḥīd* is short of that by which they would deserve the garden of paradise and its felicity, and falls short of that by which they can enter the garden of eternity and dwell in it.

And how can they reach the eternal blessings while the prerequisite of attaining them is to reach their source? It is unimaginable that a traveller may reach peace, pleasures, bounty and blessings in a desired abode while he is miles away from it. Nay, 'Verily, the wicked will be in hell' [Qur'an, 82:14]. And indeed the negligent are in excruciating punishment. 'Say, shall We inform you who will be the greatest losers by their works? Those whose effort goes astray in the life of the world, and yet they reckon that they do good work. Those are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him. Therefore their works are vain, and on the Day of Resurrection We assign no weight to them' [18:103–105]. God has refused to pour forth His light except over one who surrenders to His friends, and enters the house of His worship through its gate; one who made his *tawḥīd* to divest His originated things from (divinity) and his worship is surrendering to His friends; Whose obedience is his purpose and Whose disobedience his object of fear. And he knows that this world is the abode of tribulation whose star never falls and it is a dwelling of humiliation whose screw never turns. Its delights have to come to an end and what is loved from it is going to perish; its children are bound to extinction and mankind among them to resurrection [lit., gathering and dispersing]. We ask God ... for help to attain peace from its ruses and to take a share from its benefits. May God make us and the community of the believers among the righteous and sincere servants and unite us with our pure lords in paradise (*ḥaḥīrat al-quḥs*) and in the vicinity of the Lord of the worlds.

I completed this epistle with the praise of God, the High, and with the blessing and peace upon the pure Prophet Muḥammad, the revered and righteous, and with the peace upon the one who is true to his word, 'Alī, the legatee, and the imams from their progeny, the intercessors of their followers and the genera of their species. May the peace of God be upon all of them and the best of peace and greetings upon the *qā'im* (Resurrector) among us, al-Manṣūr Abū 'Alī Imām al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh, the Commander of the Faithful. With the praise of God and His help, the *Brilliant Epistle* is completed.